

Christian Courier

A REFORMED WEEKLY

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Haitian deacons train to fight illiteracy and poverty

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and is faced with the serious problems of modern slavery and mass illiteracy. There are no easy solutions, but the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is helping to solve these problems through a program called PWOFOOD.

PWOFOOD is a training program designed to organize the work of deacons of churches in the slums around Port-au-Prince (Haiti's capital). The project's name is an acronym based on the Creole words *Pwogwam Fomasyon pou Organizasyon Dyakona*. PWOFOOD is a partner of CRWRC but is independent

and has its own board.

Jean-Odenor Saint Cyr is co-ordinator of PWOFOOD and visited Canada in February to speak at churches and Christian schools about his work. PWOFOOD was started three years ago, but its first co-ordinator died in a car accident in Haiti in 1994. It was at his funeral that Saint Cyr first heard about CRWRC and its work. "He was a friend of mine but I didn't know he was working for CRWRC," recalls Saint Cyr. He decided to continue his friend's vision and now directs the project.

A social reality

One of PWOFOOD's focusses is training deacons to teach

literacy classes — 80 per cent of the population is illiterate, says Saint Cyr.

Therefore, Saint Cyr and his co-workers ask pastors of churches in slums for permission to train their deacons to teach adult literacy classes. The deacons receive two hours of training a week for three years, after which PWOFOOD gives each person a certificate. Deacons, in turn, can train literacy volunteers.

Once a church is ready to offer literacy classes, Saint Cyr explains, "We encourage the pastors to accept into our program people who are not Christians, because in a sense this is a way to evangelize them....

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Jean-Odenor Saint Cyr co-ordinates the Haitian training program for deacons.

Letter from Haiti: 'Weep for yourselves and for your children'



A child living in Haiti's slums

LeAnne Zook

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — She thinks I am her mother. She smiles when I walk in the room. She holds out her hand and says, "Mama, Mama." She doesn't perceive the differences in our skin colors or our languages. She only knows that I pick her up and hug her, tell her how pretty her hair is and what a wonderful smile she has, and that we sing funny, wordless songs. These are things mothers do with their children. Maybe that's why she calls me "Mama."

But I'm not her mother. Her mother stopped feeding her. Who knows why? Maybe her mother died. Maybe she stopped breast-feeding too soon. Maybe no one else in the family gets enough to eat either.

For whatever reason, this little girl ended up here at the Missionaries of Charity feeding hospital with about 100 other malnourished babies and children. Some are very sick,

and Mother Teresa's nuns and other volunteers administer medicines and give IVs. Some of the children are healing, growing fatter and more alert. Others are dying.

I putter around, helping the Haitian workers — one for every 20 children — change diapers and give food. I hold babies. I sing American musicals. (I don't yet know any Creole songs.) I try to make them smile. They have no toys other than the one rattle attached to each bed. Their only sources of amusement are the volunteers and one another.

'Blessed are the barren'

Eventually I must leave, so I set them down reluctantly. Am I only reinforcing a pattern they have already experienced — a little love that leaves too soon? The children begin to let out long, reverberating wails, and I hurry from the room. Shrieks of "Mama, Mama" echo in my

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News

Deacons, churches can't ignore slavery

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There are many cases in the slums of Cite Soleil where people are being converted because of our program. Training the deacons to have this kind of program is quite a challenge."

PWOFOD also trains deacons in community development and leadership of Bible studies. But some pastors aren't secure with having their deacons trained this way; they are afraid the deacons might take over the church, says Saint Cyr.

Rick DeGraaf, who works with church relations and domestic ministries on behalf of CRWRC in Canada, comments, "People in our Reformed background know what deacons are, but he's working with a lot of evangelical churches that have never heard of the office of deacon."

Help for the poor

Poverty is the other major problem. Some church people cannot afford to feed their families and may ask pastors for money. Saint Cyr suggests that churches keep a cash box to help families in need. PWOFOD also has a micro-enterprise program in which it makes small loans to people so that they can start their own businesses. "We try to empower them," says Saint Cyr.

Many non-government organizations (NGOs) are at work in Port-au-Prince. Some offer nutrition; the poor can come for free meals. But Saint Cyr criticizes that approach.

"How are you supposed to help somebody if somebody else has to feed him? I don't call that development. Development is: you have to help the people, to empower them to be auto-sufficient. You don't give a fish everyday to somebody. You teach him how to fish and you also provide some materials for him to get his fish."

Saint Cyr has four co-workers and a CRWRC consultant, Mark Vanderwees. DeGraaf explains that PWOFOD grew out of an organization for community development started by CRWRC on Haiti's central plateau in the late 1970s (ODEKKA). CRWRC wanted to address the problem of mass migration from the countryside to the slums of Port-au-Prince.

Many poor people have moved to the city in hopes of finding work and improving their lives. But for many, this

dream has turned into the harsh reality of slum life.

Child slaves

PWOFOD is also addressing child slavery. Recently, the *Toronto Star* reported that slavery is alive in Haiti.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 300,000 Haitian children are living in a state of virtual slavery. Many poor rural families send some of their children to families in the cities in hopes of giving the children a better life. But often these children enslaved, spending their childhoods in unpaid labor. According to the *Toronto Star*, some children are beaten or sexually abused.

These children are known as "restaveks," a Creole word taken from the French word meaning "to stay with."

"I would say myself that

what I read in that paper is true," agrees Saint Cyr. "It is a very hard thing to talk about.... It is a tragedy."

Sometimes parents don't even know the person to whom they're sending their children, says Saint Cyr. "The parents are very happy to have their kids in Port-au-Prince."

Some families may take in children and treat them as well as their own, he says. But "to treat my children as good and to treat the other children as slaves — this is a bad attitude."

Saint Cyr is a little wary of himself taking in others' children. "I don't want to put myself in a situation where I could look like I was someone who was using these children ... even though I know that in my house it would never be the same. In my house, one of these kids would be better off because I would not want to correct

[punish] them."

PWOFOD is helping to ease this situation. It is planning to work in Carrefours, a large slum where many *restaveks* live.

Church oasis

Despite the desperate slum lifestyle, evangelical churches are growing quickly there, says Saint Cyr. In addition to his PWOFOD work, he pastors Elim Evangelical Baptist Church, which has between 300 and 400 families. The name "Elim" comes from Exodus 15 and refers to an oasis where the Israelites stopped on their way through the desert. Saint Cyr sees his church as an oasis of sorts. "We want everyone to be happy once they get there," he says with a smile.

Most churches aren't addressing the slavery issue. Saint Cyr admits that "Most of them don't

seem to take this thing very seriously because they don't have a program for the family."

At his church, every fourth Sunday is "Family Sunday," a time when Saint Cyr preaches about family values and education. He encourages families who have other children staying with them to eat together at the same table — something that does not usually happen in their homes.

The government does nothing to address the problem of slavery, says Saint Cyr. "They just close their eyes over this thing." Middle class people most commonly take advantage of *restaveks*, he says. The upper class can afford to hire live-in maids.

PWOFOD's long-term goal is to empower the disadvantaged urban poor in the greater Port-au-Prince area. About half of the city's population of two million live in slum conditions.

Children find refuge in mission hospital

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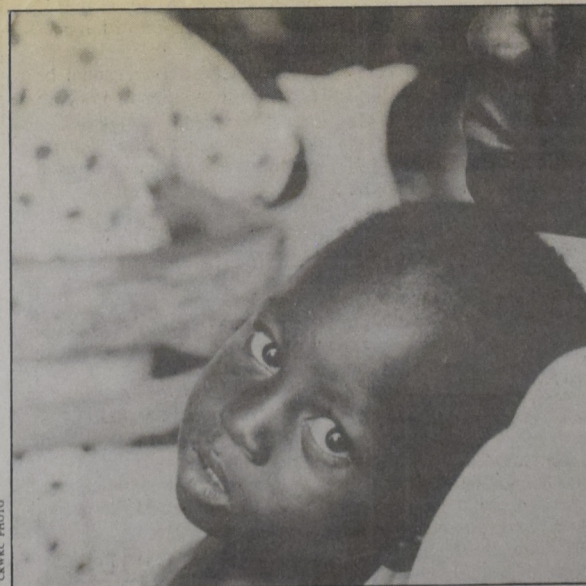
ears as I leave the building and head down the dusty, smelly streets.

It takes a long time for the echoes to silence and the images of listless, skeletal children to fade. I curse my helplessness. I also used to curse the unseen mothers. How could anyone starve a perfect, beautiful baby with velvet-brown eyes and helpless, trusting body?

For the first time in my life I understand the meaning of Luke 23:28-31: "But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'"

And then one day I walked outside behind a mother who had come to see her child. She was crying silent, shaking sobs, wrenched by her daughter's wails as they said goodbye.

I began to see the other mothers, coming in on holidays and weekends to hold and feed their children. I met a young



In Haiti, 137 out of 1,000 children die before they reach their fifth birthday — a child mortality rate 15 times greater than in Canada.

woman who showed me a photo of her dead mother and then picked up her tiny sister. I met Joseph's father, who cradled his apathetic, wasted son and said, "His mother died."

I see mothers carefully combing their children's hair. A man prays over his daughter's crib. A mother mourns a dead child, her grief filling the room in a

painful litany that other women answered.

Occasionally I am present at the celebration when a child leaves for home — healthier, smiling, dressed in special housecoming clothes.

I am responsible

As I look into the parents' faces, I cannot doubt they love

their children. As much as I might be inclined to accuse them of neglect and cold hearts, I cannot.

And as I hold their babies, singing and talking, I am nagged with the suspicion that I am also responsible for these children. As part of the "global community," I and my church and my religion in general have failed in our responsibility to these mothers.

I know that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and many other organizations are doing the best they can, where they can. I know we can't be everywhere; we must choose, weighing all sorts of factors. And I personally must consider where my knowledge can be most helpful.

But these explanations leave a bitter, metallic taste in my mouth as I look upon a starving child and her crying mother. The child I hold was starved by poverty, ignorance and hopelessness. Where were my wealth, my knowledge and my faith when her mother needed them?

LeAnne Zook is serving with MCC's year-long SALT (Serving and Learning Together) International program. She is from Iowa City, Iowa, and is a member of East Union Mennonite Church in Kalona, Iowa.

No easy way to combat separatism

Should the Supreme Court of Canada be asked to rule on the legality of Quebec's separation? The CBC reported last month that the Chretien government was considering this possibility. Justice Minister Allan Rock came close to admitting the truth of the report but within hours drew back, apparently



Justice Minister Allan Rock

deciding it would be a dangerous manoeuvre, more likely to alienate Quebecers than to settle the issue. Indeed, any attempts to solve the national unity question on narrow legal grounds is likely to backfire and would thus be ill-advised.

It is true, of course, that our Constitution Acts make no provision for the secession of a

province from Canada. Technically speaking Quebec's separation would be an unconstitutional act, and the high court would apparently be justified in ruling it invalid on this basis. After all, the federal government is bound by the Constitution to protect the rights of Canadian citizens, wherever they live, and any attempts to take Quebec out of confederation would inevitably deprive loyal Canadians in that province of their rights under the Constitution.

Popular consent a crucial element

Yet a constitution is more than a mere scrap of paper. If a sizeable proportion of the population doubts the validity of a constitutional document, then any attempt to appeal to its provisions will likely be little more successful than enacting a pro-life law would be in ending abortion in the current North American cultural climate. Popular consent may not be the ultimate source of law's authority, but it is surely a crucial element in its existence. Where such consent is lacking, the law is but an empty shell and has no real force.

Consequently, the federal government should resist the temptation to combat separatism through litigation. Too frequent recourse to the courts

is symptomatic of a political community whose members have ceased to talk with each other and to work out their differences through hard negotiation. Although grave constitutional issues are indeed raised by the threat of Quebec's separation, the threat will finally have to be addressed through normal political means.

Nothing is automatic

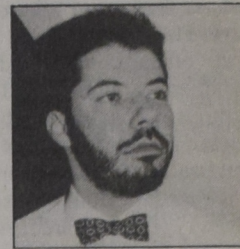
What does this mean? It means that separatists will have to recognize that there is no automatic right to separate from Canada, either in the constitution or in international law. It means that federalists will have to recognize that Canada cannot be kept together solely on the basis of legality. It means that Natives will have to recognize that their claimed rights to the northern two-thirds of Quebec are unlikely to be accepted by the majority of Quebecers. And it means that all Canadians must refrain from making claims that exclude the possibility of compromise and ought instead be willing to sit down with each other and to work out their differences peacefully.

Ultimately a court cannot be expected to rule on an issue on which there is fundamental disagreement among the general public. If a court hands down a

decision with a high probability of being ignored by a substantial portion of the political community — much less by an entire provincial government — then the court risks a dangerous reduction of its stature, and thus, of its ability to continue playing its essential arbitrating role in a constitutional democracy. As tempting as the judicial route might initially seem, the Supreme Court cannot hold together a country that does not want to stay together.

POLITICS

David Koyzis



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont., and really does want to see Canada stay together.



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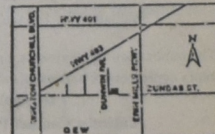
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Editorials

Prayer Day for crops and industry? How traditional!

Most Reformed churches observe Annual Prayer Day on the second Wednesday of March. Most other churches don't. The Christian Reformed Synod of 1970 reaffirmed the centuries-old tradition by saying that "The Annual Day of Prayer is a day of prayer specifically set aside primarily for the purpose of requesting God's blessing upon crops and industry" (Church Order Article 51).

In our town, five CRCs got together for an evening service that included a sermon on "Believing Prayer" and intercessory prayers for church and missions; crops, daily work, economy and relief work; homes and families; schools and other topics.

It was a spiritually enriching service, I thought. It felt good to be in prayer for the coming year. But I noticed that the crowd, although it was good-sized, represented less

than 20 per cent of the number of people that could have attended, and most of the attendees had grey hair. The prevalence of older people was to me an unmistakable sign that holding an annual day of prayer is a dying tradition in the Christian Reformed Church.

A lost sense of dependence

I can see why. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, people have been leaving the agricultural scene to move closer to where industry and commerce flourish. Consequently they do not give much thought to the growth of crops. It was, after all, concern for an upcoming harvest that led people in the Middle Ages already to call for a special prayer day for the crops. Such a day was often observed by fasting and praying all day in church. In the Netherlands, this custom flourished especially in Zeeland and Overijssel. Today we have lost that sense of seasonal anticipation. Even if we do broaden the meaning of an annual prayer day to include industry and commerce, why should the second Wednesday in March be chosen to pray for the economy? Most of the economy is not seasonal.

But Rev. Jan Pereboom, who also attended the service I described, suggested a more sinister reason to me: many people no longer see God as their partner in the production of goods and services. "Prayer Day is a celebration of God's providence and care," he told me. "But too many people see themselves as God's competitors" when it comes to providing. Their food and drink depend on their own efforts, they think, and on the state of the economy, not on God's providence and care.

So why ask God for a blessing on "crops and industry?"

No interest in tradition

According to an evangelical pastor whom I phoned the next day to find out whether other churches hold annual prayer services, traditions are "of man" and therefore of no value. He was glad that his church does not observe an annual day of prayer. "We pray all the time!" he said. "You love your wife and children all the time, too," I said. "But isn't it nice to single them out for special attention once a year? Don't you believe in the tradition of birthdays?" I suggested to him that traditions, like routines, can be very useful in preventing us from inventing the wheel all over again, and that they can serve as useful disciplines. He conceded that a Prayer Day service might not be such a bad idea after all.

My discussion with a Presbyterian pastor yielded the observation that his denomination probably used to observe the tradition I was referring to, but that people in this country no

longer worry about the availability of food. The grocery shelves are always stocked with food, even if local harvests fail. No, his church did not observe an annual prayer day, he said. "We're apt to focus more on Thanksgiving Day. Seeing is believing," he added tongue in cheek. He also mentioned how in places like Goderich and Lakeport, churches used to hold mariner's services for the upcoming shipping season. But that, too, has fallen by the wayside. He agreed that the decline of such special services is a sign of waning trust in God.

A typically Calvinist concern

In talking with a Mennonite pastor I learned that the Mennonite Brethren hold a week of prayer at the beginning of the year. This week of prayer may be focused on a certain topic, ranging from peace to employment, or anything having to do with the life of faith. It's their way of starting the year with God, and could easily include a concern for the economy. But again, except for on Thanksgiving Day, there is no special focus on crops and industry.

Rev. Pereboom thinks that the prayer for crops and industry shows a typically Calvinist concern for the creation. It has to do with our conviction that there is not an inch of life of which the Lord does not say, "It is mine." It has to do with our view of the Kingdom, which says that "heaven is where everything runs according to God's plan."

The evangelical pastor I talked with would not agree with that. "The bottom line" he said to me, "is the question: 'Are you saved?' and the fact that heaven is our destiny." He disputed my assertion that the Kingdom of God is already here and that God wants to restore this creation, not just the *people* he has created.

Emphasize our dependence

After having explored the topic of observing Prayer Day, I have come to the conclusion that it would be good to continue to call for an annual day of prayer for crops and industry. It would be our unique testimony to the belief that "as stewards of a vineyard and keepers of the land, we wish to serve our Maker and follow his command." And we would continue to recognize that we are totally dependent on God's providence and care.

But if we can't make a persuasive case for doing it on the second Wednesday of March because we lack an agricultural mindset, I would opt for the Mennonite approach of starting the year with a *week*, rather than a day of prayer. Psychologically, that might make more sense, as well as make more of an impact.

BW

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Letters/Editorial

Little hope for journalists

I would like to comment on two articles that have appeared in *Christian Courier*: an article about Bob Rae (Jan. 26) and one about the CBC (Feb. 23). Both articles could have easily been written for either the NDP monthly, if such a paper exists, or the CBC Journal.

Bob Rae ruthlessly opened abortion clinics all over Ontario during his reign of terror on morals and principles. The CBC leans so far to the left with its feminism and negative attitude towards family values that it will not miss any opportunity to promote "preferred lifestyles."

You seem to be quoting only the opinions of a professor or a well-known person, but seldom do you seem to care for the opinion of the readers of this paper (and they're the ones who pay the bills).

When Ernest Manning had just passed on to glory, a comical satire appeared in the *Calgary Sun*, portraying him at a rugged, rusted-out pearly gate, where Peter told him that he was surprised to see a politician show up. It's kind of unusual. Does that go for journalists, too?

**John Bolwijn
Taber, Alta.**

It has been rumored that God's grace is big enough to include even journalists.
Editor

Enjoys variety and readability of CC

I have just finished reading your Feb. 23 issue. We must have been reading *Christian Courier* for over 40 years. It seems that as the years go by CC has taken its own trusted place in our home, to the point that, when it is not there, we simply miss it.

Some things begin to speak louder to us, like the classified ad pages (we are not getting any younger). The editorials usually have something that forces you to think; for instance, "We need a revival of Biblical literacy." Then there is the article about Prof. Berkouwer's passing — a must reading if one wants to understand the Christian Reformed Church today.

Wayne Brouwer's "When faith grows up" forcefully reminds us that we are indeed created in the image of God and

ought to treat each other as such. I can relate to the "Two guys over 60" when they reminisce about faith and practice in the Reformed homes and churches of the past.

Of course, some articles are more interesting to me than others; but then there are others who will first read the ones that I keep for last.

In short, I am amazed at the

variety, readability and general interest of the material that fills the pages of CC each week. To keep that up requires a great deal of talent which with the CC editor and staff are apparently well supplied.

May the Lord continue to bless you.

**Richard Bouwma
Jarvis, Ont.**

CBC Tapestry with Seerveld postponed a week**CC Staff**

In our March 15 issue we called readers' attention to two CBC-AM *Tapestry* programs about Bible translating which were to air on the 17th and 24th of March. The latter hour-long program was to feature Dr. Calvin Seerveld discussing "The Craft and Art of Bible Translating."

Since then, series' producer Anna-Liza Kozma has informed us that *Tapestry* has been pre-empted for Sun., March 24. It will return to its usual slot a week later. That means that Seerveld's discussion will now air on Palm Sunday, March 31, at 2 p.m. across the country (2:30 in Newfoundland).

A postscript to this week's editorial

Some members of the Christian Reformed Church would like to see their church join other churches in the observance of the ecumenical World Day of Prayer. The focus of this day of prayer is the needs of the world.

The 1970 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church seems to have given permission for that when it said that "those churches which judge that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningful for them if it is observed in conjunction with the World Day of Prayer have the right to change the date of the service." However, it may be that the intent of this decision is to allow Christian Reformed Churches to change the date of their own service, but not necessarily that they join other churches.

The World Day of Prayer is held on the first Friday of March, which this year was March 1.

A women's focus

The origin of this day of prayer is the Women's Day of Prayer, which in the last decades has been broadened to include men.

The litany for these services was distributed by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. The World Day of Prayer International Committee meets every four years to select the themes and the countries

which will prepare upcoming World Day of Prayer services. This year's theme was Haiti and next year's will be Korea.

The collection held at services in Canada was for the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada to meet their expenses and help them in their work of "ecumenism, spirituality, human rights and issues affecting women."

According to Jo-Anne Abma of Niagara Falls, who attended

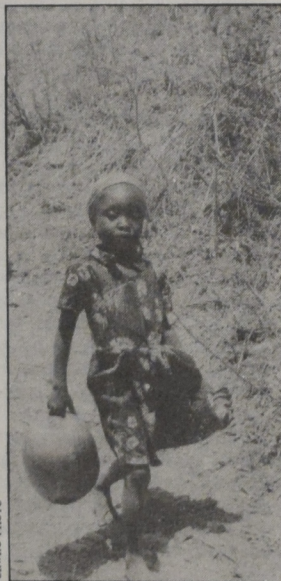
one of three Niagara Falls services, there were about 60 to 80 people present and all but three of them were women, elderly women at that.

Rev. Harvey Murphy, whose United Church in the north end of Niagara Falls hosted that service, explains it this way: "Prayer Day has traditionally been a women's prayer day, and the fact that it is held in the afternoon prevents a lot of working men and women from attending."

Judging by the character of the World day of Prayer, we're not sure that joining this event will offer a meaningful alternative to holding our own services. It seems that the World Day of Prayer is even more afflicted with a greying problem, and in addition it has a gender orientation.

In the United States, the president annually proclaims a National Day of Prayer on the first Thursday in May. The focus of this day is, of course, the nation and its needs. We in Canada do not have the equivalent of this, although, considering the threat of the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada, we probably need it more than the U.S. does.

The problem with this kind of focus proclaimed by a head of government is that it may lead to civil religion. And that's the last thing we need in Canada.
BW



The World Day of Prayer focused on Haiti.

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Environment

If you've got blood clots, a bat may be your best friend

Marian Van Til

HAMILTON, Ont. — The bat gets a lot of bad press. Hollywood has shown us umpteen close-ups of grotesque creatures with bony wings and huge, dangerously fanged mouths dripping with saliva, all geared to strike terror into our hearts.

But if it weren't for bats, we'd get a lot more mosquito bites, and our gardens and farmers' crops would be a lot more bug infested. Even vampire bats, the only bloodsuckers in the bunch, keep the bird population in check (and keep cattle on their toes) — and rarely bite humans.

We now know that the ugly mouths of those "vicious" vampires contain a treasure: that silvery saliva....

Late last year researchers at McMaster University announced that vampire bat saliva

contains a "magic bullet" for busting blood clots. And it works better than any chemicals concocted to date.

Bat clone to the rescue

The substance that does the trick is a "plasmogen activator," which the bat injects into the bite-hole it makes in its victim. That enables its tiny meal of blood to flow quickly so the bat can eat and run; or fly, as it were (a vampire bat eats only about a tablespoon of blood a day — or night).

Anticoagulant drugs currently used have side effects, including excessive bleeding. That's because they are indiscriminate and effect the whole body. The bat PA is specific and goes only for a clot in a blood vessel, say the McMaster researchers. That will allow for the production of a better and safer anticoagulant.



The researchers have cloned the bat gene necessary for the PA and are now growing it in a laboratory that is producing large amounts of the anti-clotting factor.

Scientists startled by growth of ozone hole

Marian Van Til

OTTAWA — The rapid expansion of the hole in Earth's ozone layer last fall and this winter has unnerved scientists who predicted a slower growth rate.

Expectations were that by October, when the layer is thinner than at other times of the year, it would have been about the size of the European continent. Instead, scientists were alarmed by a report from the World Meteorological Organization saying that the ozone hole had increased to record size, covering almost the whole continent of Antarctica. All ozone within a band between 10 and 12 kilometres high had been wiped out. There is no reliable explanation for such stark depletion.

Ozone acts as a filter of Earth's atmosphere, keeping out

ultraviolet radiation. As the ozone layer thins due to human-made pollution such as chlorine and bromine compounds, more harmful radiation hits Earth, causing skin cancers, cataracts, immune system damage, and damage and disease to animals and plants.

The ozone hole was first

identified in the 1980s. Though chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), a major cause of ozone depletion, are being phased out worldwide, it will take at least another five years for positive effects to become obvious. Such chemicals can persist in the atmosphere for 10 to 100 years.

This garden is more than beautiful

SAN LUCAS, Guatemala (EP) — There's a beautiful garden growing outside the Center of Christian Services in San Lucas, Guatemala, but its value is more than aesthetic.

The ixbut plant helps increase milk production in breast-feeding women. Begonia

leaves and flowers boiled in water form a liquid useful for topical treatment of fungal infections like athlete's foot.

The garden is filled with medicinal plants used to help treat members of indigenous communities.

"Poor Guatemalans often heed the advice of pharmaceutical vendors who have little medical knowledge and who often 'prescribe' strong potentially dangerous medicines without a doctor's diagnosis," says Mennonite Central Committee worker Kerri Garner. "Plants' medicinal qualities, together with traditional knowledge and customs, allow families to treat common sicknesses without resorting to expensive chemical medicines."

Ecological literacy: Just a matter of being smart?

Canadians have done it again. We topped the world in environmental know-how, or perhaps more accurately in "know-what." In a test on environmental facts given in 20 countries, Canadians scored highest: an average of eight out of 12 questions correct. So our collective environmental IQ must be up there in the stratosphere. Applause, please, and pats on the back all around. But it takes more than correct answers on a few set-piece questions to certify us as ecologically literate. What does this mean anyway?

Ecologists have worked hard over the years to communicate their fundamental understanding of the world to others inside and outside of their profession. One of the best known formulations of ecological literacy is that by ecologist Garrett Hardin. He says we perceive the world through three filters — literate, numerate and ecolate. The literate filter of words and stories is familiar to us from grade school onwards. Language is a powerful tool for understanding our world. It can help us create mental pictures, make commitments and express our care to others. You can be cut off from much of the wonder of life if you are not literate.

Words from both sides

But words can also be used to confuse a subject, not clarify it, for an audience. If only one side of an issue is aired, an inaccurate picture can emerge. This happens so often in political discourse that we automatically discount some forms of political speech.

I have found that it is especially important to remember the words of Proverbs 18:17 when I hear people speak about the environment. "The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him." If we are to do the right things for the earth, and be faithful stewards, we must have a full view of the issue.

"Numeracy" is also an important skill. Mathematics is the language of scientists and engineers and is a powerful tool to help us see the world. Physicists speak of the beauty and symmetry of a theory. On the other hand, numbers are an everyday tool to help us transform the raw materials of the natural world into useful objects. We will not be able to understand how the world works if we are not "numerate."

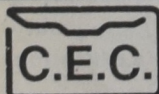
Hearing the earth speak

"Ecology"! This is not a familiar concept. The word hardly rolls off the tongue. Literacy sounds right. We have campaigns to increase literacy among our citizens. Numeracy sounds OK, but only after long repetition. It makes sense that one should be numerate. But *ecology* is clearly an "egg-head" word, something that only a professor would come up with!

Yet hidden in this strange-sounding term is an important concept. It asks us to consider the consequences of our actions for the natural world. Job was ecologically literate and he recommended this skill to others. "But speak to the animals, and they will teach you.... or speak to the earth, and it will teach you.... Which of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?" (Job 12:7-10).

Ecology is the capacity to look ahead and anticipate the consequences of our actions in the natural world. The ability to "read" the earth is an important sign of ecological literacy, and a vital skill. I hope we are recovering that ability at the end of the 20th century, for that will be the true measure of our environmental IQ.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta.



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Media/Arts

These pooches and kitty deserve to be 'lost in San Francisco'

Marian Van Til

Homeward Bound: Lost in San Francisco

Rated Family.

Stars Robert Hays, Kim Greist, Jean Smart, Benj Thall, Kevin Chevalia; the voices of Michael J. Fox, Sally Field and Don Ameche.

This sequel to the 1993 children's film *Homeward Bound: The Perilous Journey* should be a winner: like its predecessor, it's got two talking dogs and a talking cat, a likeable, if bland, family with two boys and a girl (to correspond to the three animals), some animal highjynx in the streets of San Francisco, and mild dramatic tension which will keep young kids interested.

But one can stand only so much of Michael J. Fox's rather grating voice doing an aloof, wisecracking canine version of his Alex Keaton television character. And after seeing a film like *Babe*, with its amazing "animatronics" which make live animals mouths move realistically when they "talk," watching dogs and a cat supposedly converse in human language with their mouths closed, while often not seeming to interact with each other in any way, just isn't satisfying. It has the peculiar (and initially annoying) effect of making the animals seem to communicate via mental telepathy.

No babe here

This film lacks not only the technical wizardry but the integrity of story that *Babe* has. Neither can it compare to the exciting but straightforward story-telling and camera work of *Milo and Otis*, a filmed-in-Japan drama of a lost kitten and puppy which avoids *Homeward Bound's* problem to be wisely opting to use a narrator. (*Milo and Otis* is probably the best children's dog-and-cat story ever filmed; look for it at your video store.)

The animal's relationships are superficial and built on stereotypes: the old, wise setter (the most likeable but least developed of the three animal characters) acts as a referee between a younger, macho bull dog with a smart mouth, and a preening, pseudo-dainty Himalayan cat with a one-dimensional personality (who will be no favorite of real cat lovers).

The latter two constantly insult each other, talking as if they'd be glad to see the other disappear. Only a small percentage of these remarks are actually funny, and a number of them are inappropriate for an audience of young children.

Humans only backdrops

The human characters are mere backdrops for the animals. The actors don't have much to do; perhaps that's why the boy who plays Jamie, the youngest character, quite overacts. Again, it's little screen time, both Farmer Hoggett and his wife become memorable characters (this is partly a result of much better screenwriting and partly much better acting).

One of the most entertaining aspects of this kind of film is something which will probably pass by most kids, and treads a fine line between inventiveness and ethnic stereotyping: the inner-city street-smart dogs are given voice by black actors; an elegant, long-eared, sofeul-looking pooch has a Southern accent that is somehow appropriate; and a couple of junkyard toughs sound like Italian Mafia thugs.

The predecessor to this film had many of the same problems this one has, but they're amplified here. There's very little real sentiment in this sequel. Most of it is either smark-alecky or cutesy. Kids get enough of that on television.



Media/Arts



Teaching children about angels

Marian Van Til

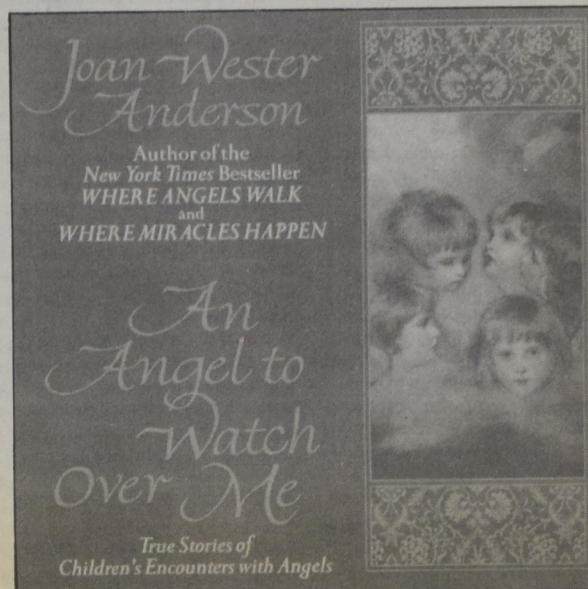
An Angel to Watch Over Me

By Joan Wester Anderson.
New York: Ballantine, 1994.
ISBN: 0-345-39773-8. 139 pp.
\$16.95 Cdn.

This book is subtitled: *True Stories of Children's Encounters with Angels*. It is intended to be read with children. The author wants children to develop a sense of being protected by God via "guardian angels," and to that end, she recounts many instances which she has heard of or been told about in which children have encountered angels.

She doesn't document these encounters with names, dates or sources of any kind; but then, she's not trying to *prove* that people (and here, specifically children) still encounter angels in the late 20th century. She assumes she's talking to believers.

While I don't doubt for a minute that God has sent and does send angels to protect, guard or save us in certain situations which he chooses (I've had one brief encounter that I interpret as such myself), the "theology" behind this book is wanting. While it does speak of angels as being under God's



control, it encourages children to see a personal guardian angel, first of all, rather than God himself, as their protector. It also encourages children to pray to "God's angels" rather than God, for that protection.

A couple of chapters end with questions to discuss with children, which essentially concern aspects of God's providential care via angels. Kids are also warned against messing with occult-related things which might involve angels

of darkness.

The book ends with a section of "angelic notes for kids" consisting of "prayers, songs, poems and more." These are a very mixed bag in terms of their useability, based on the degree of biblical spirit they exude. A final resource section is a little more useful, listing as it does other publications relating to angels, for adults as well as children. The adult resources (for adults, but about children) are the most valuable.

No 'dirty dancing' here

WACO, Tex. (EP) — Students at Baylor University, the U.S.'s largest Baptist institution, can get "footloose" this spring. After 151 years, the school will permit on-campus dancing. The first dance is tentatively set for April 19. Various committees have studied the dancing issue for years, as Baptist faith and practice have grown increasingly tolerant of some things once considered worldly diversions.

The university already permits aerobic and folk dancing classes, performance dance and cheerleader dance routines during football and basketball games, but this spring's function will be the first at which

students are permitted to dance socially for purposes of entertainment. Baylor President Robert Sloan assured the school's Board of Regents that no "lewd gyrations" would be permitted, but Rev. Miles

Seaborn, a leader of conservative Southern Baptists in Texas, asks, "Who's going to be the lewd-gyration inspector?"

The most news on the Netherlands and the Dutch in Canada and the USA.

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Church

Christians worldwide are persecuted, U.S. House of Reps told

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Christians face harassment and persecution around the globe, and the United States should do something about it. That was the message witnesses brought to the House Subcommittee on International Relations and Human Rights February 15.

Committee members promised that they would not ignore the problem: "We are going to make this a significant national and international issue in the coming year," pledged Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.). "We should make it our policy as decent people in the world to end this."

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), chair of the subcommittee,

added, "In this age when human rights are always in danger of subordination to other objectives, ...we need to be reminded that when people are persecuted in distant lands, it is often because they believe in God, and 'seek to do his will on earth, as it is in heaven.' We need to see their faces, and be reminded that they are our brothers and sisters."

Persecution across the spectrum

A dozen witnesses representing Catholic and Protestant organizations presented stories of abuse by Communist governments in China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam, and by Islamic nations in the Middle

East and North Africa.

Tom White, director of the Voice of the Martyrs, criticized Fidel Castro's Marxist government in Cuba for burning a Havana warehouse that contained 27,000 Bibles.

Nina Shea, director of the Puebla Program on Religious Freedom, said China's Catholic and Protestant minorities face "escalating threats" from the government's Religious Affairs Bureau. Shea said China is more repressive now than at any time since the late 1970s, and added, "China has the dubious distinction of holding more Christian prisoners than any country in the world."

Joseph Kung, president of the Cardinal Kung Foundation,

shared stories of abuse suffered by Catholics in China. "Ordinary citizens suffer serious routine harassment for their faith at the hands of the Public Security Bureau," he said. "This includes intimidation, short-term detention, beatings, physical abuse, lack of medical treatment during confinement, and heavy fines [which] I would characterize as ransom."

Forced to go underground

Abe Ghaffari, executive director of Iranian Christians International, said, "While some Iranian Christians have lost their lives, others have found no choice but to worship in small underground house

churches. A small percentage, about one per cent, find ways to flee Iran."

An Amnesty International report charged Pakistan with forcing Christians to undergo "unfair" trials for blasphemy, and accused Saudi Arabian religious police of breaking up Christian worship meetings. "Others have been arrested solely for the possession of religious materials such as cassette tapes and Bibles," the report said.

The hearing followed a call by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) for an effort to prevent persecution of Christians around the world. The Christian Reformed Church is a member of NAE.

As Burundi's crisis continues, church leaders unite to 'speak the truth prophetically'

BUJUMBURA, Burundi (MCC) — January was a grim month in Burundi's capital. Power outages, water shortages and strikes paralyzed the city.

Reports of massacres throughout the country again raised fears that ethnic conflict in Burundi might follow the same genocidal path Rwanda took in

1994. For decades conflict between Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups has sporadically flamed up in both Central African countries.

But February brought a glimmer of hope. From February 4 to 6 Burundi's Protestant church leaders, formerly bitterly divided along ethnic lines, met at a church centre near Nairobi, Kenya. They emerged from the meeting united and committed to "speak the truth prophetically without fear or favor to all sides in our country." Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) helped arrange the meeting.

The church leaders spent the first hours of their meeting getting re-acquainted — learning to know and trust one another

again and talking about their experiences, their dreams for a peaceful Burundi and possible strategies.

Calls for multi-ethnic army

One major sticking point was differences in attitudes toward the army. Hutus generally see the primarily Tutsi army as the greatest problem, while Tutsis believe only the army can protect them from genocide.

At one point during the meeting, as recriminations flew, the group decided all non-Burundians should leave the room to allow them to work at their problem as brothers.

Three hours later, the Burundians announced they had

ironed out their differences. From then on, the time was spent productively preparing documents that will guide their work over the next months.

Key to their document is a statement calling for Burundi's army to be multi-ethnic. The church leaders set up a task force to guide their efforts. For example, they plan to contact political figures, army leaders and even rebel militia leaders to share their vision for a better Burundi.

A document is only a piece of paper until some action is taken, but the participants are optimistic that some positive steps will be taken that might help resolve Burundi's crisis.

Lebanese government tolerates lawlessness

BEIRUT, Lebanon (EP) — Lebanon's top Christian leader used his Lenten message to accuse the government of tolerating corruption and lawlessness. Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, patriarch of the Maronite church, blamed the government for failing to restore order following the 1975-90 civil war.

"The state of law has not yet been restored," he said. "People with rights get justice only by using tricks foreign to a state of law, in which there is no place for influence and recommendations to recover rights or put right a flagrant injustice."

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Chinese approve new Bible school

SHANXI PROVINCE, CHINA (CANS) — Chinese officials have approved the start-up of a new Bible school in southeastern Shanxi province, just 100 miles from where the same officials recently raided another Bible school, shut it down and arrested the director. The two schools offer identical discipleship training.

"These acts are not done ac-

cording to laws or principles," says Freddie Sun, director of Christian Aid's China Division. Sun spent 10 years in prison and hard labor because of his faith. "The attitude and emotion of the local enforcement agency determines what is allowed at any particular moment," he explains.

The director of the ransacked Bible school and two co-

workers, remain under arrest. Despite the apparent inconsistency, believers praise the Lord for the new school, which will be able to train 80 workers during its first session.

Christian Aid has provided funds to help establish the school, along with 14 others in various places in China.

MARCH 22, 1996

Church

Hard texts and heretics

The Mormons have baptized more than 100,000 Jews who were killed by the Nazis during World War II. By a ceremony called "baptism for the dead," the "Latter Day Saints" add previous generations to their membership rolls. If one of your or my relatives were to become a Mormon (God forbid!), he or she could say to that church, "I have ancestors who never had a chance to become members of the 'true church of Jesus Christ,' the one founded by Joseph Smith. Then the church would perform baptisms on behalf of the dead. Thus the name of your great-grandmother might be on the rolls of the Mormon church."

In the case of the Jewish ancestors who were killed by Hitler's henchmen, the Mormons had to make amends. A group of Jewish Holocaust survivors protested and got the Mormon church to promise that it would quit baptizing Jewish death-camp victims (see CC, June 9, 1995).

Whether or not the church "un-baptized" those it had baptized already, I do not know. And I do not think that you or I would have enough clout to make the Mormons erase some of our forebears, if these forebears are on the Mormon lists. In Mormon temples they baptize the past and they reserve the future: you can get baptized for your grandparents but you can also get married for your future life on a star.

An obscure practice

Where did the strange notion of "baptizing for the dead" come from? The words that set this fantasy and all the computerized genealogies in motion are in 1 Corinthians 15:29: "If there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?"

As you know, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul argues that without the resurrection the Christian faith makes no sense and Christian preachers would be liars. If there is no resurrection we would be fools to endure the persecutions and sufferings of the present world. We would give our all for nothing. And also this "baptism for the dead" would make no sense if there is no resurrection. Paul does not teach "baptism for the dead," he does not agree with it, commend it, or condemn it. He says only that it presupposes the resurrection.

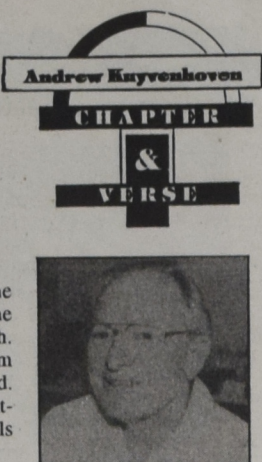
The custom to which Paul refers is "unclear in spite of all the research that has been devoted to the subject," says theologian Herman Ridderbos. Does it mean that living believers were baptized for unbelievers who had died? Or does the practice have something to do with the (well-documented) idea in the early church that death without baptism would leave a Christian without forgiveness — and that therefore someone else was baptized for that person and over his or her dead body?

Or should we translate "baptism" here by "being overwhelmed with trials and sufferings" as in Mark 10:38, 39, where Jesus says, "Can you be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

There is a list of possibilities from which interpreters choose. But unless new evidence is found, we will never be sure what "baptism for the dead" meant to the Christians in Corinth when Paul wrote this letter to them.

It's deeply sad that cults spin their doctrines out of Bible verses that are unclear to the church universal. May God stop the deceivers and have mercy on the deceived.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired Christian Reformed minister and former Banner editor and lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Christianity and Judaism leave most favorable impressions, says poll

GLENDALE, Calif. (EP) — Though church attendance and other forms of participation in the Christian church are on the decline, most adults think Christianity has a positive impact on society, says a new poll.

According to a recent nationwide survey of adults in the U.S. conducted by the Barna Research Group, 85 per cent believe that Christians have a positive impact on society. The next highest rated religion is Judaism, with 58 per cent possessing a favorable impression of Jews. On the other hand, relatively few people have a positive view of the social influence of atheists (13 per cent).

Seven religions included

Survey respondents evaluated the impact of seven major belief systems on contemporary culture. Only two of those seven faith groups — Christianity and Judaism — are perceived by a majority to have a favorable influence. Four of the groups (Islam, Buddhism, Scientology and atheism) are viewed in a negative light by a higher proportion of adults. The seventh group, Mormonism, has more adults who view it positively (43 per cent) than negatively (27 per cent), but the number of adults with no opinion meant that the positive rating was still awarded by a minority of adults.

Barely four in 10 viewed Muslims as having a positive impact on society, while half saw the effect of Islam on society as negative. More people believe that Buddhism has a negative influence (51 per cent) than positive (45 per cent). Two in three adults (63 per cent) see the influence of Scientologists as negative.

Cultural residue or active influence?

George Barna, president of the company which conducted the research, explained, "While many Americans are not practicing Christians, they retain some identity with the Christian faith and remain protective of it. They are suspicious of other faith groups because they are unknown or different, and we are generally uncomfortable with those who are not just like us. Diversity may be a rallying cry for the politically correct, but for the average American, the acceptance of diversity in

religion, as in politics and race, is not a widely embraced notion."

Not surprisingly, Christians and non-Christians rate the major faith groups differently. A majority of born-again Christians give Muslims (71 per cent), Buddhists (76 per cent), Scientologists (81 per cent), and atheists (92 per cent) negative ratings. Far fewer non-Christians hold negative views of adherents to those faith groups: Muslims (24 per cent), Buddhists (22 per cent), Scientologists (30 per cent), and atheists (50 per cent).

Nevertheless, even among non-Christian respondents, the social impact of Christians was more likely than any other faith measured to be viewed positively: almost eight in 10 non-Christian adults view Christianity positively (77 per cent). Of the seven religions assessed, only Judaism and Christianity received positive ratings from a majority of non-Christians.

Catholics and Protestants should bury the hatchet

The survey also found that a large majority believe Catholics and Protestants should put aside doctrinal differences and work together to address the social, economic, and spiritual needs

of the culture. Only four per cent of respondents said they believe that the rifts separating the two religious groups were insoluble.

Barna says, "A majority of adults have little knowledge of the traditions and doctrine of their own church, much less that of other faith groups. As far as most are concerned, Protestants and Catholics are all Christians, separated by history and minor but undetermined theological differences. To most people, the only difference is that Catholics have a pope and Protestants don't. People tend to judge a faith on the basis of style and structure rather than substance."

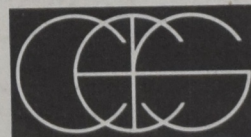
Affiliation affects ideology

Church affiliation was one important factor in perspectives on the desired nature of the Catholic-Protestant relationship. Slightly more than nine out of every 10 Catholics and Lutherans were supportive of more extensive unity in ministry between Protestants and Catholics. Support was more tempered among other mainline Protestant denominations (83 per cent), and even less enthusiastic among Baptist and evangelical churches (69 per cent).

van der Woerd
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Feature

Regrets...

Doug Woosley

I believe that I'm finally beginning to get a hold on things now that my whiskers are white and my hair is turning gray. I only hope that it's not too late. As a young man, I considered myself smarter than I was, and I made a lot of mistakes. I guess I'll spend the rest of my life atoning for those mistakes.

Ironically, I grew up in a home with good parents who loved and guided me. I think about the poor kids today, raised by just one parent, or by two who are just as confused as their kids, and my heart goes out to them. If I had been raised like that I might not be here today to tell this story.

The funny thing is that I was a model child. I didn't have much choice. My strong-willed father and diligent mother stayed on top of me all day long. I learned quickly that I could avoid a lot of problems by doing the right thing.

When I got to college, however, I became giddy with a sense of freedom; and like most young adults, I wanted to make my own rules. But I stretched my freedom a lot further than most. Whereas they contented themselves with limiting their rebellion to drinking, smoking pot and having casual sex, I challenged the whole philosophy by which I was raised.

I became a "free-thinker." I abandoned the values that had been instilled in me; I created my own values. First, I ditched my Christian faith, replacing God's voice with my own burning intellect. I set out on a reading program devised to make myself an intellectual, although even at that time, I knew I wasn't brilliant.

I made almost all "A's," which I did for my parents (some things I couldn't change). But I did my academic work with my left hand, as it were. With my right hand I pursued my own course of study. I read Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher who took independent thinking about as far as it can go.

While studying pre-medicine — my father wanted to "make

me a doctor" — I read philosophy, world religions and existentialism. I had little time for frivolous activities, which didn't interest me anyway. I soon discovered that I could make A's with progressively less effort, which left me with more time to pursue other interests — romance and friendships.



In the fall of my third year at South College, a sweet, pretty, freshman coed fell into my lap. The timing couldn't have been better. Books no longer satisfied my every longing. At that same time, I became friends with Ben Carter, my philosophy professor. He became my mentor as well. We remain friends to this day, 21 years later. Sally Quick and I lasted one year. I could have predicted that.

There was a time, however, when I thought that Sally and I might get married. Most of my fellow students thought the same thing. They probably perceived us as the ideal couple. Sally compensated for my surliness with good humor and charm. Her blonde, blue-eyed good looks complimented my dark hair and complexion.

The rift between Sally and me developed because she didn't like Ben Carter. Actually, she considered him evil. She couldn't stand his influence over me, and thought that I would quit thinking "wild thoughts" if she could separate us. She refused to believe my wild thoughts were my own.

Sally gave up a lot for me — primarily her virginity — during our first month together. Before that, she gave up a boy friend. It was only fair that I should have given up a few things too, especially my desire to become a free-thinking intellectual. She convinced herself that if she could separate me from Ben, I would become as normal as she.

Neither Sally nor I were thinking straight. She would never change me and I would never be able to live my life both ways, even though I desperately wanted to hold on

to both Sally and my intellectual freedom, as personified by Ben Carter.

We had fallen in love so quickly, before we knew who we were; and we fell into a passionate sexual relationship just as quickly. And then we developed a genuine love, well beyond our years. Everything happens so fast when one is young. How can one expect to avoid making great mistakes?

I made most of the mistakes. Two years older than Sally, I should have been the more responsible one. I should have seen what was coming and set Sally free long before I did. And when I did cut it off, I should have done so with more compassion. As it was, I broke Sally's heart.

She served up her heart to me with near-complete trust, and I crushed it. I can think of no greater sin. Of course, I did not believe in sin, or at least not much. But as I watched her suffer during the following months, I couldn't deny that I had done a terrible thing. Such a sweet girl, she deserved nothing but love and consideration.

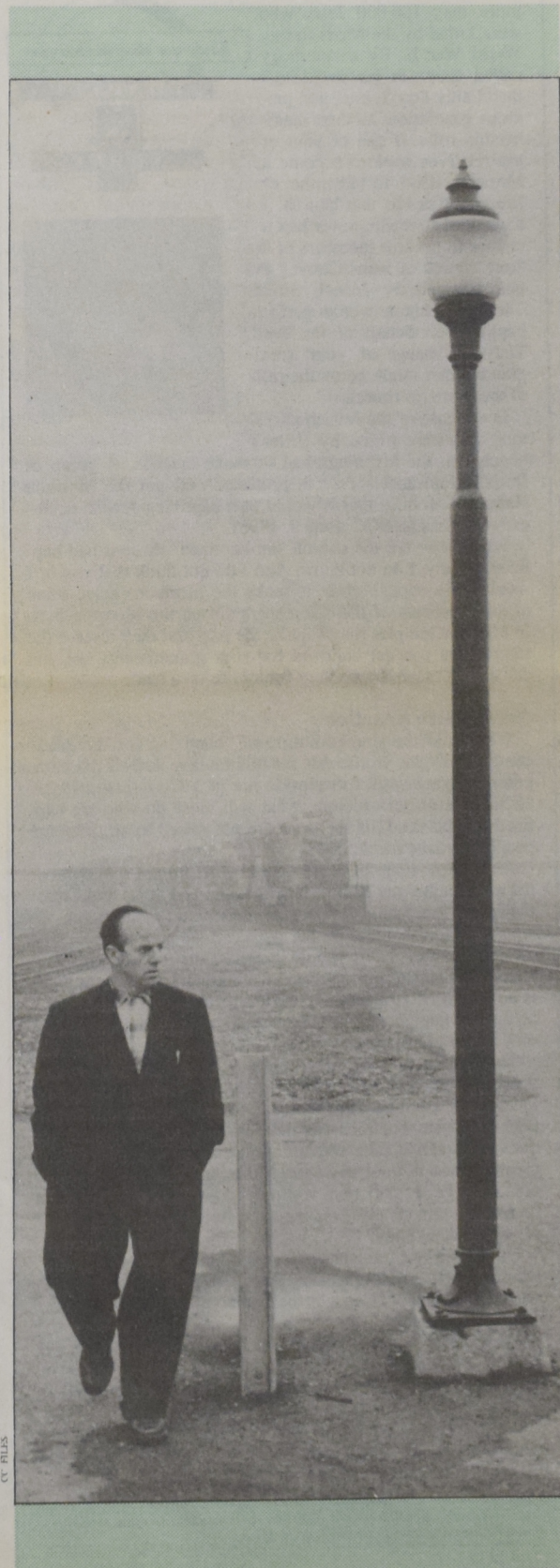


These past 20 years I have been paying for my ill-treatment of Sally Quick. I hear that she has gone on to have a good life as a wife and mother and career professional. She wanted the comforts of middle-class life, and I wanted to search for truth out on the edge of society. I imagine Sally's living a happy and fulfilled life, and I pray she is.

As for myself, I live a tormented life, still clinging to the edge. As I've gotten older, the sins of my youth burden me all the more. I think of Ben Carter, that he is equally tormented. In fact, most of my intellectual friends suffer from their "wild ideas." We struggle to find truths that seem to come so easily to people like Sally Quick.

I don't know how it could have gone differently between Sally and me, given our natures. I sometimes wonder if I've learned anything from my mistakes. One thing I do know, however: that we're all in desperate need of forgiveness.

Doug Woosley is a full-time writer who lives in Huntsville, Alabama.



Feature

Helping single and divorced people find their niche



Liz Wagner (left) and Karen Opthof at a singles group ski weekend in Midland, Ont.

Alan Doerksen

Divorced, widowed and other single people often feel rejected by churches because they do not fit the "traditional family" mold. As a divorced Christian woman, Elizabeth Wagner is working to help single people find their place in the church.

Wagner started "Mountainview Christian Singles and Singles Again" at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, Ont., in 1994, on the recommendation of the church's deacons.

"Most singles don't feel like they're part of the church," she says. "We're trying to provide a safe environment for Christian singles.... Part of our thrust is to educate the church on the needs of singles."

The group is mainly made up of separated and divorced Christians. They tend to come out at least six months after a marriage break-up, at which point reconciliation is past, says Wagner.

Going through a divorce is a painful thing, and sometimes Christians hurt more because of their beliefs, Wagner comments.

Other Christians often have a hard time relating to divorced

or widowed people. Widowed people will get some sympathy early on, but that is not usually the case for divorced people. But if a husband or wife is abandoned by his or her spouse, he or she feels the same pain as someone who is widowed, says Wagner.

A church needs to support

It is important for churches to support divorced people, especially in the first two years after their marriage breaks up, Wagner stresses. Otherwise, they may leave the church in loneliness and frustration.

Divorced people are often stigmatized by other church members, "even if that person is the good partner," says Wagner. "In singles ministry, we still believe that marriage is forever.... But the problem is that in reality it doesn't always happen."

"Single again" people (divorced or widowed) "don't want to be pitied ... but we do need support, especially at the beginning," explains Wagner. When she was divorced 22 years ago, she didn't get the support she needed from her

former church. "I became overwhelmed and I left the church," she says. Afterward, nobody from the church called her, which was a huge disappointment, Wagner says.

At the time, her son and daughter were five and seven years old. They are now 27 and 29. Wagner's daughter lives in Grimsby and her son lives in the U.S., where he is working with his father.

"His father and he are developing a relationship they never really had," comments Wagner.

Wagner's children are not Christians. "My children don't know the love of God," she says. "That makes me feel very sad."

Wagner says it is important for divorced couples to let their children move freely between their two households. Wagner is now on better terms with her ex-husband and says, "He's remarried and has married a wonderful lady."

A full parking lot

In the late 1980s, Wagner felt God calling her back to the church, and in 1991, she first attended Mountainview CRC — by herself.

"I didn't know what kind of church they were," she says. "All I knew was that the parking lot was always full. So there must be something good happening there. When I walked in the door, they were so welcoming, I felt that I had come home."

Although she was away from church life for about 17 years, Wagner says, "I'm so grateful

that the Lord was patient with me."

Before she joined the Mountainview church Wagner knew little about the Christian Reformed Church. But in 1993 she publicly professed her faith at her new church.

A turning point

The next big step for Wagner was getting involved with singles ministry. Shortly after going back to church in 1991, she attended her first singles conference. "It turned my life around," she asserts.

Wagner felt a strong calling from God to work in a singles ministry. As she prayed about it, she promised God, "If this is what you want me to do, it's your move."

Two years ago, Wagner hosted a singles conference for the first time.

The Mountainview singles group spells out its essential ministry using the word 'singles' as an acronym:

Singles striving to be
Integrated into the body of
Christ seeking
New beginnings by accepting
God's gifts of
Love and compassion and
directed to
Evangelize other
Singles.

The group's main objectives are:

- ◆ to recognize singleness as an acceptable lifestyle;
- ◆ to minister to each other in times of crisis;
- ◆ to assist single adults in becoming integrated into the church body;

◆ to help members of the church family see single adults as family members with unique gifts and talents to offer;

◆ to provide single adults a place of service to minister in the church family;

◆ to develop support structures in the church to meet the unique needs of single adults and single parent families.

One is whole

The Mountainview singles group meets twice a month and has guest speakers on topics such as blended families, and sexuality and the single person. The group also holds adult and family outings, workshops and seminars.

Twice a year, in spring and fall, there is a singles conference. The next conference will have the theme "A Celebration of Wholeness," and will be held the last weekend in May in Guelph, Ont.

"One is a whole number," and single people are whole people, comments Wagner.

Although she is heavily involved with the singles group, it is strictly volunteer work for Wagner. Her "day job" is office management for Hamilton Occupational Therapy Associated, Ltd. She also spends time caring for her 90-year-old mother.

Wagner would like to help other churches start singles ministries. Groups like the one at Mountainview would work well at other churches, she says. In the near future, Wagner is planning to help start a support group exclusively for widowed people.



An outdoor Sunday service at a 1995 singles conference at Ontario's Camp Kwasind.

Comment

These 'union' statements divide

Dear Bert,

In Calvin Seminary Forum (winter 1996) President James DeJong reacted to the 12 South Holland Conference 1995 statements (see box).

DeJong said: "Eleven of them are principles affirmed officially by the Christian Reformed Church and embraced by the vast majority of its members and leaders" (my emphasis).

I wonder:

* Why do some of these South Holland statements read strange to me?

* Why does the whole of it seem foreign to my understanding of what it is to be Reformed?

My parents' teachers (Bavinck, Berkouwer, Schilder) taught me that according to the Reformed perspective on Christian faith and life, tradition is valued but not worshipped; systematizing faith inevitably leads to idolatry; and human beings had best be very modest when it comes to claiming possession of "the whole counsel of God" beyond the borders of "everything one must believe to be saved" (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 7). Aren't some of these statements advocating the very positions I was warned against?

Frankly, I'm afraid. When in the Netherlands the Gereformeerde Kerken split (1943-45), it was a synodical, written document (on infant baptism) that made the break inevitable. I've been afraid of written ecclesiastical documents of the South Holland kind ever since, for they often lead to synodical documents of the same kind. Is that just a personal peculiarity? Or should the whole CRC be alarmed? Isn't this "South Holland 1995" document forcing CRC members to say Yes or No?

I have no problem living with people who hold *opinions* such as the ones expressed in the statements — I've done that all my life. But if officially adopted by a congregation, a classis, an "inter-classical covenantal union" or a denomination, these statements seem to force every member of any such institution into an "in" or "out" position.

Anyway, how vast is DeJong's majority that embraces these South Holland principles? Many CRC people I know show me in their informal language and behavior that they don't hold these positions, are

either ignorant of them or hold positions similar to mine.

Moreover, it also seems to me that some of the statements contradict one another. Let me single out statements 2 and 3 as examples.

Is Statement 2 a faithful reflection of the CRC's confessional tradition? I found it ironic that these South Holland folk stress that "the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions are a faithful and accurate statement of the Bible's teaching (3)," when not one of those mentions "inerrant," "authoritative" or "infallible" for the Bible. The *Belgic Confession* (articles 207) calls the Scriptures "holy," "divine," "canonical," "from God," and "authoritative" only in contrasting canonical and apocryphal books. With the exception of "canonical," and with some liberality in exegesis (stretching the meanings of actual Bible words) those terms can be found in Scripture about Scripture itself. "Inerrant" and "infallible" about Scripture are nowhere to be found.

The *Belgic Confession* uses "infallible," (Art. 7), but only to point to the rule. "Test the Spirits to see if they are of God." "Our World Belongs to God" echoes the *Belgic Confession*, and adds the "reliable" concept (35); it uses "infallible" itself only for God's will (36).

So, aren't statements 2 and 3 contradicting each other? Judging by the evidence, at minimum Statement 2 goes much beyond Statement 3, perhaps carelessly so, perhaps wilfully so.

On all 12 statements I have heard and read varying opinions throughout my life — within the church, I mean. That's fine with me. The church benefits from variety, and I'm happy to live with variety based on mutual respect. Why suddenly a curtailment of variety and respect? Why such a verbal stick?

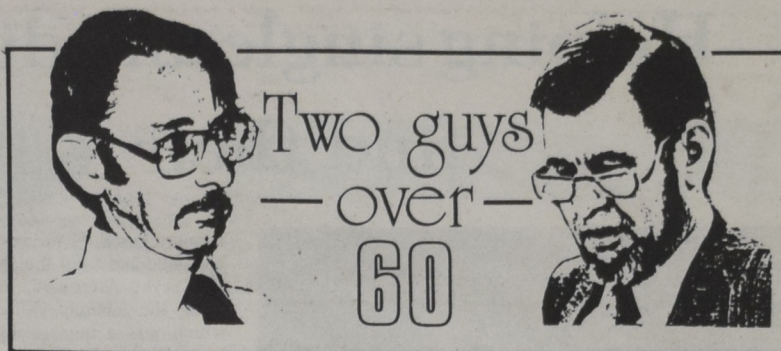
Let me summarize my position:

1. The "South Holland 1995 document" is a *divisive* document.

2. It represents a *departure* from the Reformed form of Christian faith as I was taught it and have lived it all my life.

As I said, I'm afraid.

*Yours against splits,
Adrian*



Bert Witvoet

Adrian Peetoom

Dear Adrian:

I'll keep my comments brief to accommodate a reprint of the South Holland statements.

You said that these statements read strange to you. I am with you on that one. Almost all of them have a funny smell about them that I would not associate with biblical Reformedness.

Take the first statement: "The character of our Triune God — for example, sovereign, immutable, holy, just, yet merciful and loving — must shape the faith and life of the church." What does that mean? How does God's immutability shape the faith and life of my church? Are we to become immutable? My wife already complains that my feeble attempts at immutability are a pain in the buttocks.

As for the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions being an "accurate statement of the Bible's teaching" — I am willing to say that they are a "faithful" response to the Bible's teaching, but an *accurate statement*? This is the language of an accountant who declares the church's financial statement to be accurate. Our response to Scripture is not supposed to be "accurate," but full of faith.

I can go on, but I won't. These statements fall under the judgment of an article entitled "Jesus' Peculiar Truth," which can be found in the March issue of *Christianity Today*. In it the author says the following: "Jesus did not arrive among us enunciating a set of propositions that we are to affirm.... Jesus never asks us to agree; he asks us to join up, to follow."

The South Holland statements also remind me of a discussion I attended at McMaster University two weeks ago, where Henk Hart of the ICS discussed faith as *trust* and faith as

belief in teachings. Both are acceptable parts of our faith experience, said Hart. But when faith is reduced to a belief system and becomes "a spirituality of reason," we become spiritually blind.

I would say the reason you and I are uncomfortable with

the South Holland statements is because we smell a spirituality of reason.

'Nuf said.

*Trustingly yours,
Bert Witvoet*

Twelve statements

Below are the 12 South Holland Conference statements which were proposed as the theological basis for an "inter-classical covenant union."

1. The character of our Triune God — for example, sovereign, immutable, holy, just, yet merciful and loving — must shape the faith and life of the church.

2. The Scriptures are the infallible, inerrant, authoritative, perspicuous Word of God.

3. The ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions are a faithful and accurate statement of the Bible's teaching.

4. Reformed churches must preach and teach the whole counsel of God as taught in both the Old and New Testaments, seeking to make and nurture disciples for Jesus Christ.

5. We are dedicated to living out the three marks of the true church: maintaining the centrality of the preaching of the Word as the primary means of grace, administering the sacraments faithfully, and using discipline to uphold the purity of the church and restore sinners.

6. We must maintain the use of our historic form of subscription for office bearers.

7. Reformed churches are called to be connected to and accountable to one another according to the biblical principles of our church order.

8. Reformed churches must not have ecclesiastical fellowship with denominations that deviate seriously from Scripture either in doctrine or life.

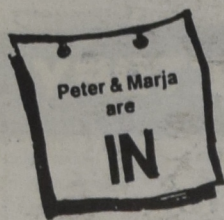
9. Women are prohibited by the Scripture from being ordained to the ecclesiastical offices with spiritual authority.

10. That sexual behavior outside marriage — and marriage is defined as a faithful, covenantal relationship between a man and woman — is not in accord with God's will for our lives.

11. We must preserve the biblical practice of using masculine titles and pronouns in references to the persons of the Trinity.

12. We must live out our covenant and kingdom responsibilities by preserving for and passing on to the coming generations our historic Reformed commitments in doctrine, life, worship, and missions (such as maintaining two services on the Lord's Day, catechism preaching, and requiring a credible profession of faith before coming to the Lord's table).

Advice



Seeking God's kingdom first

Dear P & M:

Should we all set money aside for our future retirement? I feel like a simple-minded man when I see so many others putting money into RRSPs and other investments. I know you will probably say I should put a certain percentage aside, since this is the advice of most people in the know. I have not given it much thought, or should I say, I don't want to give it much thought since I know that I could not afford to invest even if I wanted to.

We live on a tight budget. If we had a bit of extra money we would use it to buy clothes or other things we try to do without. Our priorities are doing whatever we can to raise our children in the way of the Lord. To that effect we send our children to the Christian school. Our financial contributions to the church and school amount to 12 per cent of our net family income. To give less would create hardship for these institutions. Most of my family and co-workers would advise us to use that money as investment for our retirement. They don't realize that it is invested in our future with our Lord.

It is our hope that the pension I will accumulate from the companies I work for, in addition to the government pension, will allow us to live modestly when we retire. In fact, we depend on that, otherwise we will be in trouble. We feel that if we are faithful to God, he will take care of us and provide for us. This is our only hope. We hang on to Christ's reassurance: "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you as well."

Dear Kingdom Investor:

If you keep following your current strategy, you won't be able to live extravagantly and do whatever you want to whenever you want to as a retiree. On the other hand, because of your trusting and contented attitude, you can look forward to a very good life, free from anxiety. It's an attitude that we have seen and treasured especially in the older generation. It's an attitude that will be blessed by the Lord because it looks beyond self to the needs of the Kingdom.

Your letter provides us with a vivid example of the way we Christians are to think differently than others. The world says: "Pay yourself first. Look out for Number 1." We say: "Seek first the Kingdom." The Lord is Number 1! The world says: "Don't trust that you'll be looked after in the future. The Canada Pension Plan will probably disappear, so you've got to sock everything away into RRSPs." We say: Trust that the Lord will provide. You may have to experiment with different ways of preparing manna, but he has always taken care of his people.

The world dreams about Freedom Fifty-Five and a life of leisure in the Caribbean. We celebrate Freedom in Christ and a life of service wherever the Lord leads. The world measures success by the amount of stuff one accumulates before death. We measure joy by the generosity of someone's distribution throughout life. All of this is not to say that we don't believe in planning ahead. The Bible still asks us to learn the wise ways of the ant, which stores its provisions in the summer and gathers its food at harvest (Prov. 6:8). But our experience with people who have reached retirement age tells us that the spirit of simplicity and contentment which Jesus espoused will see you through.

Practically speaking, we strongly encourage you to make your mortgage payments and make it your goal to own a home before you retire. The absence of mortgage payments or rental fees will be the biggest factor in making your retirement budget work. If your house is paid for, you should be able to live simply but comfortably on your company and government pensions. We also want to reassure you that you will have some good years of saving ahead of you once your children are through Christian school. This, too, will add to your future financial stability.

Lastly, we want to add a disclaimer. We are not financial experts. And we don't want to discount the importance of making RRSP payments when possible. Even as we make that disclaimer, however, we want you to know that everyone on the panel loved your attitude and shared your confidence in the Lord's future provision.

For those readers who question our advice today, we can simply observe that in all our years of ministry we have never, ever met a retired Christian couple or single person who has not had reasons to thank the Lord for his and her daily provision. Our guess is that you haven't either. Doesn't that tell us a lot?

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Got problems? Let us try to help

CC Staff

The letter supply for *Peter & Marja are IN* has been pretty sparse lately. We need you!

Got a problem you'd like help with but you're worried about "exposing" yourself?

You needn't be. You can be assured that all letters received are dealt with in confidentiality. Peter and Marja Slofstra will know who you are. Readers won't; and in all very personal cases, not even the advising panel knows who you are.

Got a personal problem you'd like help with but you've noticed that the column seems to be about church-related problems?

We've been answering a lot of church-type problems lately, and that's OK; but that's not the column's intent. Since its inception in 1989, we've wanted it to help readers sort through interpersonal problems from a biblical perspective, helping others at the same time.

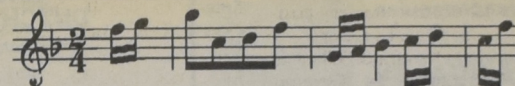
About our panel: Peter & Marja are "assisted" by a five-person panel (see at left). Once a month the panel meets in the

CC library with the Slofstras, who will have already read the letters and prepared anonymous copies. Each letter is read aloud and discussed.

The panel includes thoughtful people (we think) with a variety of experience: pastoral care and Bible study; professional counselling; teaching in diverse settings, subject areas and grade levels; being a physician; work with the handicapped; life in diverse communities in three countries; worship (and work) in several denominations while being grounded in a Reformed perspective; being parents and grandparents; long experience as a single adult; "blue collar" and "white collar" job experience; and a sense of caring, recognizing that "we're all in the same (fallen) boat."

Despite each person's unique approach, the panel always arrives at a consensus. Peter and Marja then go home and write up their own answers to each letter, using the discussion as a basis for those answers.

Give them a try. They're waiting to hear from you!



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If you wish a photo included, send us the original. d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements. e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.). NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address. Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313	 Aalten Toronto 1946 March 26 1996 "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Ps. 127 and 128). It is with great joy and thankfulness to God that we are able to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and Opa and Oma JELTE & JOHANNA (HANNA) AGES (nee VAN EERDEN) We pray that God will continue to bless and keep them in his care in the years to come. Joanne & Bert Van Lange Monica, Kristen & Derek, Jolene Jerry & Margaret Jeremy, Erin, Steven, Paul Anne-Marie & Peter van der Maas Johanna, Mark, Caitlin All friends and relatives are invited to come to an open house on Saturday, March 30, 1996, from 3-5 p.m. at Rehoboth Fellowship Church, 800 Burnhamthorpe Ave., Etobicoke, Ont. Address: 2471 Islington Ave., Rexdale, ON M9W 3X9	 Congratulations to Anno and Ena Slomp (nee Van Der Veen) on the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary! 1956 April 6 1996 "The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household" (2 Sam. 6:11). With joy and thanksgiving to God, we are delighted to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents ANNO and ENA SLOMP (nee VAN DER VEEN) Congratulations and love from: Klaas & Deb (Cutforth) Slomp — Nobleford, Alta. Jessica, Laura, Brad Mike & Judy (Piers) Slomp — Edmonton, Alta. Stefan, Caitlin, Genieva Flo Slomp — Edmonton, Alta. Al & Betty (Hofman) Slomp — Nobleford, Alta. Michelle, Matthew, Scott, Alyssa Grace (Slomp) & Mike Pool — London, Ont. Mel & Anita (Veldhuisen) Slomp — Edmonton, Alta. Kyria We invite you to celebrate with us at an open house on April 19, 1996, from 7 - 9:30 p.m., at Sven Ericksen's (1715 - Mayor Magrath Drive, Lethbridge, Alta.). Home address: Box 1357, Lethbridge, AB T1J 4K1	Nieuwerkerk a/d IJssel London 1946 1996 With thankfulness to God we hope to celebrate, D.V., on March 28, 1996, the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents PETER and NELLIE HOGENDOORN (nee KARREMAN) Margaret & Hank Vandersleen — Belmont, Ont. Nancy & Bob Legge — Owen Sound, Ont. Irene & John Snider — Owen Sound, Ont. Peter & Joyce Hogendoorn — Jordan, Ont. Coby & Gil Henrich — Owen Sound, Ont. Mary & Dave Gillies — Owen Sound, Ont. Brenda & Ray VanderKooi — Lacombe, Alta. Patricia & Chris Ford — Waterloo, Ont. 19 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Home address: 505-2040 Wavell St., London, ON N5V 4R7	Obituaries Harkema Opeinde Calgary Fr. Alta. Oct. 23, 1917 - March 2, 1996 Psalm 116 On March 2, 1996, after a short but difficult battle with cancer, our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother GRACE (GRIETJE) RAUWERDA (nee VANDERMEER) went to be with her Lord and Savior. Besides her loving husband of 55 years John (Johannes), Grace is survived by her four daughters: Trynette & (Allen) Brander — Calgary, Alta. Gerrie & (Henry) Vanderveen — Abbotsford, B.C. Dora & (Dirk) Schonewille — Edmonton, Alta. Judy Rauwerda — Calgary, Alta. her 12 grandchildren: Ken, Robert & (Brenda), Michael, David, Philip, Cynthia, Trevor, Tamara, Pauline, Jonathan, Doreen and Brian. and her three great-grandchildren: Nicholas, Meghan and Annalies Grace. Grace was predeceased by two infant children and is survived by her sister Hiltje and brother Rienk, both of the Netherlands. The memorial service took place on Wednesday, March 6, 1996, in the Emmanuel Chr. Ref. Church of Calgary, with Pastor Peter Nicolai conducting the service. Correspondence address: 4916 Graham Dr. S.W., Calgary, AB T3E 4L4
Births BOSVELD: Ed and Joanne thank the Lord for the arrival of a healthy daughter KRISTEN AMANDA BOSVELD born March 6, 1996, weighing 8 lbs., 9 oz. A little sister for Joshua Ryan (22 months) and another tormentor for Tiger. Tenth grandchild for Albert and Gerrie Bouwers of Metcalfe, Ont., second grandchild for Martin and Lynn Bosveld of Chatham, Ont. Kristen and family live at: 20 Mitchell Avenue, Brampton, ON L6Z 1H3. Phone (905) 840-3189.	Personal ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #302, 1502-2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2	Vacations GOING TO HOLLAND FOR VACATION? Why not rent a VACATION APARTMENT and visit family and sight-see at your leisure. CENTRALLY LOCATED near APELDOORN. year-round accommodations. FOR BROCHURE OR MORE INFORMATION CALL Harold or Nellie at (905) 985-7891 or fax us at (905) 985-0195.	Job Opportunities Aldershot Greenhouses Ltd. a well-established greenhouse operation, has an immediate opening for a GROWER to work in our pot mum and pot rose production. The successful applicant should possess a strong work ethic, be self-motivated and a team player. Position requires basic horticulture knowledge and "hands-on" experience. Mail or fax resume to: Aldershot Greenhouses Ltd. 1135 Gallagher Rd. Burlington, ON L7T 2M7 Fax: (905) 632-4022 Attn.: Len VanderLugt	

Classifieds

Obituaries	Job Opportunities	Teachers	Teachers	Teachers
"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want" (Ps.23:1). On Wednesday, March 6, 1996, the Lord called unto Himself his servant OEBELE SYTSMA of Townsend, Ont., in his 83rd year. Beloved husband for 58 years of Abeltje (Doll) Sytsma. Dear father of: Jack & Justina Sytsma — Caledonia, Ont. Bemie & Mary Sytsma — St. Ann's, Ont. William & Jenny Sytsma — Holland, Mich. Garry & Harmene Sytsma — Hagersville, Ont. Peter & Jean Sytsma — Holland, Mich. Dear grandfather of 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Brother of Peter and Tjalkje, both of the Netherlands, and the late Willem, Reinder and Engeline. The funeral took place on Saturday, March 9, 1996, at the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church, Jarvis, Ont., with Rev. Riemer Praamsma officiating. Correspondence address: Mrs. Abeltje Sytsma, Apt. 106, Parkview Meadows, 72 Town Centre Dr., Townsend, ON N0A 1S0	Herdsmen/manager wanted. 44 tie stall barn. Some field work necessary. Call (613) 398-6956	KITCHENER, Ont.: Laurentian Hills Chr. School invites applications for 1 definite teaching position in Grade 1 (ability to teach Grade 1 French desirable) and 2 possible 50% positions (one in Primary and one in Junior). Interest and expertise in computers an asset for all positions. Please forward letter of application and resume as soon as possible to: Luke Janssen, Principal 11 Laurentian Drive Kitchener, ON N2E 1C1 (519) 576-6700	ORANGEVILLE, Ont.: Orangeville Chr. School invites applications for possible teaching positions at the primary level and at the junior level. The ability to teach music (instrumental and vocal) would be an asset. Please send a letter of application and resume to: Mr. George Hoytema, Principal Orangeville Chr. School P.O. Box 176 Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z6 Phone: (519) 941-3381	RED DEER, Alta.: Red Deer Chr. School has possible openings in the primary (K-3) and intermediate (4-6) divisions for the 1996/97 school year. Interested individuals should direct their applications or inquiries to: Mr. R. Duggan, Principal Red Deer Chr. School 14 McVicar Street, Red Deer AB T4N 0M1 Phone: (403) 346-5795 Fax: (403) 347-3003
	Teachers	CLINTON, Ont.: The Clinton and District Chr. School, currently presenting Christian education to 232 students grades K-8, invites applications for a possible teaching position in the senior grades. Interested applicants should submit a letter of application, resume and references to: Mr. Clarence Bos, Principal Clinton and Distr. Chr. School Box 658 Clinton, ON N0M 1L0 (519) 482-7851	OTTAWA, Ont.: Ottawa Chr. School, through restructuring and expected vacancies, is interested in receiving applications for three teaching positions for 1996-97: French - 55% Grade 1 - 100% Grade 3 - 90% Send resumes to: Wm. A. Van Dyke, Principal Ottawa Chr. School 2191 Benjamin Ave. Ottawa, ON K2A 1P6 or fax: (613) 722-5836	ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE, Alta.: Rocky Chr. School, an interdenominational school (K-9) with 170 students, invites applications for the following teaching positions for the 1996/97 school year. A definite vacancy in lower elementary, possible openings in upper elementary and junior high (English, health, drama, computer skills). Interested applicants should send resume, references, philosophy of Christian education and statement of belief to: Bill Slofstra, Principal Rocky Christian School 5204-54 Avenue Rocky Mountain House, AB T0M 1T3
For Sale	Bruce Mitchell Chatham Chr. High School 90 Park Avenue East Chatham, ON N7M 3V4	LACOMBE, Alta.: Lacombe Chr. School, situated in the town of Lacombe in central Alberta and serving 350 students in K-9, invites applications for a Jr. High (7-9) Math/Computer teacher for the 1996-97 school year. Possible openings are also anticipated in the elementary (1-6) grades. Please send applications and inquiries to: John Piers, Principal Lacombe Chr. School 5206-58 Street Lacombe, AB T4L 1G9 Phone: (403) 782-6531 Fax: (403) 782-5760	OTTAWA, Ont.: Redeemer Chr. High School announces a possible opening for a teacher of computers, history and Bible for 1996-97. Send resume and letter of application to: Derek Maggs, Principal 2199 Regency Terrace Ottawa, ON K2C 1H2 Phone: (613) 721-7142 Fax: (613) 721-8233	SARNIA, Ont.: Lambton Chr. High School needs a science teacher and possibly a physical education teacher for the 1996-97 school year. Please address all inquiries and applications, including a statement of faith, to: Mr. Wayne Drost, Principal Lambton Chr. High School 295 Essex St. Sarnia, ON N7T 4S3 Phone: (519) 337-9122
BEAUTIFUL TRI-LEVEL COTTAGE For Sale: Beautiful tri-level cottage with sunset view of Chesley Lake. It has three spacious bedrooms with private balconies, 200 amp service, baseboard heating and woodstove. There is a 12' x 16' utility shed and space for parking four vehicles. This unique arrangement is part of a Christian-oriented property association. Asking \$89,000. Call (519) 338-1295, evenings	GEORGETOWN, Ont.: Georgetown District Chr. School has a possible opening in the junior grades. Preference will be given to candidates who have expertise in French, P.E. and/or music. Please send resumes to: Mrs. Treena Sybersma, Principal R.R. 1 Georgetown, ON L7G 4S4 or phone (905) 877-4221 for further information.	LACOMBE, Alta.: Central Alberta Chr. High School invites applications for a full-time teaching position in either the humanities or sciences. This staff position is required as a result of growth in our grade 10-12 school. Consider joining an excellent staff who have the support and encouragement of a caring society. We all work together to provide a culture of learning and nurture to a great group of 80+ students. Applicants should be teachers that have the ability to teach from a Christian perspective rooted in the Reformed tradition. Eligibility for an Alberta Teaching Certificate is required. Please send resumes to: Jack Vanden Pol, Principal Central Alberta Chr. High School 22 Eagle Rd., Lacombe, AB T4L 1G7 Phone: (403) 782-4535 Fax: (403) 782-5425	PETERBOROUGH, Ont.: Rhema Chr. School, a denominationally diverse elementary school of approx. 200 students, is seeking applicants for possible junior grade teaching positions. Expertise in computers, science and team sports will be an asset. If you are a qualified Christian teacher, interested in joining our dynamic Christian staff, please send a resume to: Rhema Chr. School 3195 Parkhill Rd. E. Peterborough, ON K9L 1B8	ST. CATHARINES, Ont.: Beacon Chr. High School invites applications for possible openings involving instruction in science, French, PE and art for the 1996-97 school year. The successful applicants will be qualified in two of these areas. Send resume and statement of educational philosophy to: Ted Harris, Principal Beacon Chr. High School 2 O'Malley Dr. St. Catharines, ON L2N 6N7 Fax: (905) 937-1130
For Rent	HAMILTON, Ont.: Calvin Chr. School invites teacher candidates to apply for the following positions: Primary Division — full-time Junior Division — 40% position Intermediate Division — 40% position CCS has served the Hamilton area since 1952 and has a current student enrolment of approx. 335 students. We are blessed with an excellent supporting community and are able to offer a varied program with special education, library/resource, and music specialist support. If you would like to consider joining a dynamic team of committed teachers who provide high quality Christian education, please forward your resume to the Principal: Mr. A. Ben Harsevoort Calvin Chr. School 547 West Fifth St. Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7 Phone: (905) 388-2645 Fax: (905) 388-2769	MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.: Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is an interdenominational school, currently presenting Christian education from Kindergarten to Grade 8. With a preference towards experienced teachers, we are now accepting applications for definite teaching positions in the intermediate and Middle School grades. Please send resumes to: Rod Berg, Principal Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School 12140 203rd Street Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4V5 Phone: (604) 465-4442 or Fax: (604) 465-1685	PRINCE GEORGE, B.C.: Cedars Chr. School has full-time and part-time opening at the junior/senior high school level in English, Physical Education/Athletics, Chemistry, Biology, Business, Math, French. Applicants must be eligible for membership in the B.C. College of Teachers and should have the ability to teach from a Christian perspective. Please send in resumes, including a Christian Education Philosophy statement to: Cedars Christian School 701 N. Nechako Rd. Prince George, BC V2K 1A2 Attention: Hiring Committee Fax: (604) 564-0729	SURREY, B.C.: Fraser Valley Chr. High School, an interdenominational school in the Reformed tradition serving families and students in the lower Fraser Valley, has openings in the areas of industrial education, social studies, Bible/religious studies and possible openings in English and art for the 1996/97 school year. Applicants should send resumes to: Mr. Al Boerema, Principal Fraser Valley Chr. High School 15353-92 Avenue, Surrey, BC V3R 1C3 Phone: (604) 581-1033
Cottage — to rent — very clean and on beautiful lake. One hour north of Bancroft. Canoe and rowboat included. Phone (905) 648-5869				
House for rent in Jordan-area, Ont. Two-bedroom bungalow. Private country setting. \$625 per month plus utilities. Call (905) 354-4672				

Classifieds

Teachers	Church News	Teachers	Teachers	Teachers
TERRACE, B.C.: Centennial Chr. School invites applications from committed, Christian educators to fill definite openings for the 96/97 school year in the following areas: Grade 4 - 10 Art Grade 4 - 10 French Grade 4 - 10 Learning Assistance/Resource These positions could also involve teaching duties in other areas. Additional openings for classroom teachers are anticipated at primary and intermediate levels. Centennial Chr. School presently offers Christian education to approximately 260 students in Kindergarten - Grade 10. The addition of Grades 11 and 12 is being planned. Please contact: Centennial Chr. School Frank Voogd, Principal 3608 Sparks Street Terrace, BC V8G 2 V6 Phone: (604) 635-6173 Fax: (604) 635-9385	Christian Reformed Church Candidate approved: — Classis B.C. South-East, led by the Holy Spirit and with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, has examined and admitted candidate Andrew Turkstra to the Ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. We thank God for Andrew and Trish and wish them the Lord's rich blessing and strength as they begin the work of planting a church of Jesus Christ in Mission, B.C. Gerrit Veeneman, Stated Clerk. Classis schedule change: — Classis B.C. South-East, has adopted a Friday afternoon/Saturday schedule on a trial basis for its next two meetings. We hope this schedule will encourage greater participation by elders who otherwise are restricted because of work-related responsibilities. The next two meeting dates for the classis are now September 20-21, 1996, in Vernon, B.C., and March 7-8, 1997. Gerrit Veeneman, Stated Clerk.	† Hamilton District Christian High School † Dedicated Students Committed Staff Demanding Christian Curriculum Strong Inter-personal Sharing Effective organizational Policies We continue to experience the blessing of a growing student population. This privileged situation allows us to solicit applications for one full-time teaching position and the possibility of two additional openings. We are interested in teachers with one or more of the following areas of expertise: Science, Bible, Music, Computer Technologies or English. We prefer qualified professional teachers who enjoy interaction with young adults, who view teaching as a craft that requires constant refinement and who delight in the service of our Master, Jesus Christ. Please respond in writing to Mr. Jim Vanderkooy, Principal, at 92 Glancaster Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9 Fax: (905) 648-3139 prior to April 5, 1996. High Academic Standards † Strong Support Community		
VANCOUVER, B.C.: Vancouver Chr. School, a denominationally diverse community which offers Kindergarten through Grade 10, has potential openings for a full- or part-time French teacher, a part-time music teacher and a full-time opening at the primary level. Please send your resume to: Ron Donkersloot, Principal Vancouver Chr. School 3496 Mons Drive Vancouver, BC V5M 3E6 No applications by fax, please.	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous
WALLACEBURG, Ont.: Wallaceburg Chr. School announces a definite opening for a PRINCIPAL for September 1996. Wallaceburg Chr. School has about 90 students K-8 from a wide variety of denominational backgrounds. Principal has teaching responsibilities. Respond to Principal Search Committee c/o Irene Hooyer 29250 Flat Rock Road R.R. #6 Dresden, ON N0P 1M0	Miscellaneous	Summer Job Market Attention: All Students We know that many of you are thinking about summer jobs at this time. As in previous years <i>Christian Courier</i> will carry the Summer Job Market section in the Classifieds. We urge you to check this section until May 24. Send us your announcement now and include name, age, address, phone number, experience and the type of work you are seeking. Be as brief as possible! Please note: 1) We will run your ad in up to four (4) issues of <i>Christian Courier</i>. 2) Please cancel the ad as soon as you have found employment so that you don't use up valuable space needlessly. 3) Due to tough economic times, we are compelled to begin charging a small fee for the space used. We suggest you send us a cheque for \$5 x the number of weeks you wish us to run the ad (maximum \$20, GST incl.). Good job hunting! Stan de Jong Manager Attention: Employers This summer why not hire a student to help ease your workload and get some extra things done? This spring, students will advertise their skills in our Summer Job Market section of the Classifieds. Please consider hiring one of them. Some students may be hired when you call them. Please be patient. Sometimes they are hired before we can cancel their ad.		
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	The Living Word Sermons for reading services. Contact: R. Vander Ploeg Secy./Treas. 210 Clarke St. N. Woodstock, ON N4S 7M7 Phone: (519) 539-2117		
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Kerkdiensten op Videocassette in de Nederlandse taal vanuit Nederland, aangepast op het Canadese VCR systeem VHS-SP. Schema voor 1996 op aanvraag. Prijs per video \$20 (incl. verzendkosten). Voor inlichtingen schrijf of bel naar: STICHTING ZENDTIJD VOOR KERKEN c/o T. (Charlie) Wendel, 498 Bunting Road, St. Catharines, ON L2M 3A8. Tel.: (905) 937-4583		

Attention:

Campgrounds
and
Resort Areas

With summer 1996 not that far away, we plan to group your advertisements in the **April 19, 1996**, issue. The advertising deadline is **April 10, 1996**.

Many *Christian Courier* readers will soon be making 1996 vacation plans. Let us have your ad copy and instructions as soon as possible so that our readers will know who and where you are!

Stan de Jong, Manager

Share your family news with the rest of us. Place an ad in C.C.



The Living Word

Sermons for reading services.

Contact:

R. Vander Ploeg Secy./Treas.
210 Clarke St. N.
Woodstock, ON N4S 7M7
Phone: (519) 539-2117

Please take advantage of our monthly **Business Directory**. For a low cost of \$25 (plus 7% GST) you can advertise your business.

Classifieds

Events	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities
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Nederlandse Paaszangdienst

Wij nodigen U uit voor onze
Nederlandse Paaszangdienst
op
Zondag, 7 april 1996
7.30 n.m.
in de
**Emmanuel Reformed
Church**
**170 Clarke Street, North
Woodstock, Ont.**

*Na de dienst is er gelegenheid
om vrienden te ontmoeten
onder het gebruik van koffie en thee.*

Travel

DCA Travel  Holland
Travel
Professional
Toronto 416-224-5211
Toll-Free (Canada wide)
1-800-667-2525
Fax 416-224-0842
Grimsby 905-945-3301
Burlington 905-522-8602
Emergency Service Available
Business & Vacation Travel

Miscellaneous

Schizophrenia

IT IS A DEVASTATING
DISEASE OF THE BRAIN
FOR WHICH THERE IS,
AS YET, NO CURE.

ITS SYMPTOMS INCLUDE
HALLUCINATIONS,
DELUSIONS, SOCIAL
WITHDRAWAL, PARANOIA
AND A COMPLETE LOSS
OF SELF-ESTEEM.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

SCHIZOPHRENIA
If You Think Spelling It's Hard,
Imagine Living With It.



Schizophrenia
Society of Canada

Société canadienne
de schizophrénie

PLEASE CALL:

1-800-809-HOPE

NC

REDEEMER COLLEGE

Redeemer College

requires part-time instructors for the 1996-97
academic year in the following areas:

CHEMISTRY
(fundamentals; general chemistry laboratory)
THEATRE ARTS
(19th Century Theatre Literature)

Applicants should possess a Master's degree and
should be in agreement with the Reformed
Christian basis of the College.
Deadline: until filled.

Direct all inquiries and applications to:
Dr. M. Elaine Botha, Vice-President (Academic),
Redeemer College, 777 Highway 53 E.,
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4

REDEEMER COLLEGE - A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

For Sale

Come Into His Presence...

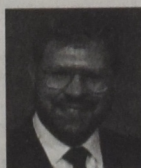
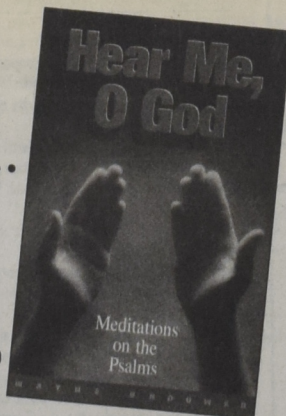
Meditations on the Psalms

The book of Psalms is filled with
human emotion: cries of anguish,
whispers of fear and despair, quiet
hymns of peace, and shouts of joy.
Hear Me, O God is a collection of 150
meditations on these moving songs.
Writing with warmth and insight,
author Wayne Brouwer weaves together
stories and his experiences as a Christian Reformed
pastor to draw us into a fresh look at the message of
each psalm for our own lives. Order a copy of
Hear Me, O God for yourself and one for someone
you love.

#1701-0660CC \$12.45^{US}/16.80^{CAN}

Also by Wayne Brouwer:

● **WALKING ON WATER:**
Faith and Doubt in the
Christian Life
#1701-0700CC \$9.25^{US}/12.50^{CAN}



To order, call:
CRC PUBLICATIONS
1-800-333-8300 US
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Langley Christian Schools require for the 1996-97 school year

Middle & High School Campus

22702-48 Ave., Langley, BC V2Z 2T2
Phone: (604) 533-0839 Fax: (604) 533-0842
Principal: Mr. Peter Van Huizen
3 Middle School Teachers (Gr. 6-7)
A Middle School Curriculum Co-ordinator (for Gr. 6-8)
1 High School Science Teacher
1.5 High School Teachers with expertise in
Socials, Computers, Bible, Math, Applied Skills

The High School will be offering Grades 9-10 in 1996-97, Grades
11-12 in the next two years. Applicants may be interested in
considering future openings. The position of official Vice-Principal will
be made in 1998. Until that time the school will have an acting
vice-principal. If you are interested in an administrative role you may
communicate your intention early with the school.

Elementary Campus

21789-50th Ave., Langley, BC V3A 3T2
Phone: (604) 533-2222 Fax: (604) 533-7276
Principal: Mr. Leo Smit
1 Primary Teacher (Gr. 1/2 area)
1 Intermediate Teacher (Gr. 3/4 area)
1 Teacher with strong Computer Skills, able to manage
a lab and also able to teach phys. ed.

Send applications complete with resume, statement of education
philosophy & university transcripts to the Principal at either campus.

Look for
Peter and Marja on page 13...

MAPLE REINDERS

The Maple Reinders Group of Companies, recognized nation wide for
30 years for construction and engineering, has a challenging opportunity
based at its head office in Brampton, Ont., for a:

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

With an exciting business plan for continued growth in Ontario, Alberta,
British Columbia, and international markets, Maple Reinders wishes to
attract a seasoned Chief Financial Officer to provide financial and ac-
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As a resource to the President and CEO and as a member of the
Executive Team, you will direct dynamic staff and enhance all aspects of
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regulatory reporting, financial planning and analysis, auditor and banker
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operational support as well as contribute to corporate strategies.

We are seeking a professional who is qualified as a C.A. with extensive
experience in financing. The successful candidate will be a team player
with strong communication and people skills, showing excellent judgment
and personal initiative.

Send resume in confidence to:

Mike Reinders, P.Eng., MBA, President
Maple Reinders Group
201 County Court Blvd., Suite 600
Brampton, ON L6W 4L2

MARCH 22, 1996

Classifieds/Events

Job Opportunities

Job Opportunities

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

Smithville District Christian High School

6488 Smithville Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
(905) 957-3255

As the Lord has blessed us with an increase in enrolment, we are soliciting applications for the teaching positions in the following areas for the 96/97 school year.

- Physical education and a combination mathematics and/or science and word processing.
- Science with the possibility of a combination of the above courses.
- a 2/3 science position for semester 1 only.

Direct your application and or your inquiries to
Marc Strooboscher, Principal SDCH.



KAMLOOPS
CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL

DIRECTOR

Kamloops Christian School, an interdenominational school of 475 students, requires a **director** for **September 1996**. The successful candidate for this newly created position would have strengths in development (Capital campaign), public relations, and fiscal management. A proven and experienced leader in Christian education, the director will be responsible to the board for all school activities. Personnel management and policy development would also be important functions. Please send complete resume and appropriate documentation to:

The Administrative Planning Committee
Kamloops Christian School
Box 668, Kamloops, BC V2C 5L7

Miscellaneous

Retire On Vancouver Island

Evening's Ease Court

A 36 Unit, Christian Senior Housing Development, consisting of spacious bungalows and duplexes. Enjoy the company of fellow Christians and live in an architecturally designed home.

Second Phase Homes Now Selling

- located in Duncan and the beautiful Cowichan Valley
- many opportunities for recreation in surrounding area
- within walking distance of churches and stores
- 52 km. scenic drive north of Victoria
- ideal mild year-round weather
- bus service available
- recreational facility
- future care home



For more information contact:

Mr. L. Bakker (604) 748-2270, Mrs. C. Atsma (604) 748-1257,
Mr. P. de Vries (604) 748-6745

Annual Book Sale

Redeemer College Library, located near the Ancaster Fairground on Highway 53 E., Ancaster, Ont., is having its annual book sale on **Thursday, March 28** from 12 noon - 8 p.m., **Friday, March 29** from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. and **Saturday, March 30** from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

We have thousands of books on a variety of different topics including philosophy, theology, literature, music, history, as well as books in Dutch and French. All books will be **priced between \$1 and \$5**.

PARKVIEW MEADOWS RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Townsend, Ontario

"A unique Christian Retirement Centre"
has for sale

A 2-BEDROOM LUXURY SUITE

Nestled in the picturesque village of Townsend, Ont., known for its bicycling and walking trails. You will find this unique Christian Retirement Village **just west of Jarvis, Ont.**

Available by covered walkway is the nursing care centre, dining hall, Sunday worship services, hairdresser, bank, tuck shop, library workshops, games room, craft room, daily activities, etc.

To view this spacious apartment call (905) 768-5239

Kerkdiensten op cassette in de Nederlandse taal

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Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

March 22 "OACSS Mass Band Festival 1996," 7:30 p.m., Jubilee Fellowship CRC, St. Catharines, Ont. Info./tickets: 905 937-7411.

March 23 "Pipes in Praise," an organ concert of improvisations presented by Rick Dykstra, 7:30 p.m., Knox Presb. Church Hincks St., St. Thomas, Ont. Free-will offering. Info.: (519) 631-9245.

March 23 The "Mattaniah Male Choir" in concert, 8 p.m., Trinity ORC, 99 Scott St., St. Catharines, Ont. Free-will offering. Info.: (905) 954-9123.

March 23 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group performs "De Kerkestraat is een Keurige Straat," a three-act comedy in the Dutch language, 7 p.m., Clinton Town Hall, Clinton, Ont. Info./tickets: (519) 482-9257. (#)

March 24 Organist Ian Sadler in concert, 3 p.m., Central Presb. Church, Hamilton, Ont. Admission free. Info.: (905) 522-9098.

March 26-30 The RC Theatre Arts Dept. presents Henrik Ibsen's play "Peer Gynt," at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Tickets/info.: (905) 648-2131.

March 28 Annual meeting, Homestead Residential & Support Services, 8 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.

March 29 40th Anniversary celebrations of the Jarvis District Chr. School. Theme: "His Faithfulness Through All Generations" (Ps. 89:1b). At 8 p.m., Jarvis Community Centre, Jarvis, Ont.

March 29 An evening with Dr. Bob Goudzwaard on "Setting the Captives Free: Hope and the Economy," sponsored by CPI, 7:30 p.m., Alumnus Hall, St. Michael's College, Toronto, Ont. Info./tickets: (416) 979-2443. (#)

March 29 Concert by the "Garden City Male Chorus," also featuring "The Ambassadors," 8 p.m., Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ont. Free-will offering.

March 29-31 "Reformed Marriage Encounter" weekend, Peterborough, Ont. Info./registration (905) 386-6523. (#)

March 30 "The Ambassadors" and the St. Catharines "Garden City Male Chorus" in concert, 8 p.m., First CRC, Hamilton, Ont. Programs at the door - \$6.

News

Two philosophers ponder faith and integrity

Bert Witvoet

HAMILTON, Ont. — Can an intellectual have both faith and integrity? Two Christian scholars predictably said Yes. They had come to hold a discourse at McMaster University under the auspices of the university chaplaincy services and Christian Reformed chaplain Aren Geis-terfer.

Dr. Henk Hart of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto joined Dr. Travis Kroeker of McMaster University in a discussion that showed agreement on the answer to the question but differences in how each scholar worked it out. About 30 people attended.

Hart argued that "historically, religious faith is primarily trust" in realities we can't fully understand. But in the West, faith has been reduced to a belief in *statements*, because

somewhere along the path of history, "Christianity took Israel's faith into a Hellenistic climate of trust in reason."

When faith moves from trust to belief, it moves from confidence of the heart to intellectual assent, said Hart. "Faith as belief system can be taught by sharing information. Trust cannot be taught in that way." Hart compared teaching faith as trust to the way we teach singing: "By singing together."

In those circles where faith is understood primarily as belief in doctrines, the heroes of faith are those who have great theological insight. But where faith is seen primarily as trust, there the heroes are people like Sister Teresa, said Hart.

Hart did not suggest that faith should not express itself as beliefs, but he wanted to point out that when faith is reduced to



From l. to r.: Kroeker and Hart

belief, it becomes a cousin of reason, and will lose out to reason in the academic field.

According to Hart, the question of whether an intellectual can have both faith and integrity can only be answered positively if faith is seen first of all as trust, and if reason is recognized as being limited to only that part of reality that allows itself to be ordered and structured.

Travis Kroeker took a different approach to the question. Instead of seeing Hellenic thought as the enemy, he saw it as an ally in the pursuit of wisdom, which goes beyond the world of knowledge.

According to Kroeker, the modern university is "increasingly coming to resemble the marketplace in our culture" where education is bought so that one can acquire a "good

job," which will provide access to the "good life." In this climate, ideas are bought according to the prevailing style and fashions, and science tries to control our physical space. This approach seriously compromises one's integrity as a scholar, said Kroeker.

He finds an ally for Christianity in Plato, who saw the soul as being "fundamentally related to an eternal good" which humans cannot manipulate for their own benefit, "but which illuminates the true meaning of human existence."

Wisdom in the Bible is linked to the divine purposes of the Creator and has a moral quality, said Kroeker. To the question whether an intellectual can have both faith and integrity, Kroeker's answer was: "Only if one seeks wisdom and not mere knowledge."

Promise Keepers Clergy Conference brought personal healing

Erick Schuringa

(Last week's report on the Promise Keepers Clergy Conference held February 13-15 in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia, featured Rev. Peter Slofstra's impressions. This week, a member of CC's Editorial Advisory Committee who was there, Rev. Erick Schuringa of Waterdown, Ont., gives his impressions of this event.)

Forty-two thousand pastors in one building, the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, is not only the "largest, most diverse gathering of pastors in history," it is a lot of professional piety needing to face brokenness. And that is what the Promise Keepers Clergy Conference was all about — facing brokenness.

I travelled by mini-van with four seminary classmates (Calvin Theological Seminary '93). The trek due south on I-75 was already a much welcomed reunion with friends, prayer partners, and colleagues. But the thrill of rejuvenated communion with friends was mild compared to the renewal of communion with God in Christ experienced at the conference.

The conference began Tuesday evening with three sessions to focus us on our common bond as pastors called by God. Speaker Tony Evans gave a "recall" to the tired, the worn and to those thinking maybe it was time to quit ministry.

On Wednesday we were

brought face to face with ourselves time and again. It was clear that the speakers had walked many miles in pastors' shoes as they shared insight into the tension and joy a pastor can find in personal worship, with family, being accountable, building character and facing brokenness. Wednesday was

Kingdom work, with special attention given to breaking down denominational and racial barriers. The conference closed with a sermon on the cross and the celebration of communion.

All this information cannot capture the experience of attending this conference. I personally summarized the experi-

ence was hurt in my ministry. But coming before God in honesty makes clear our frailty and his powerful love. And there is nobody who lives without the need of recognizing personal frailty in the presence of God's powerful love.

The denominational problem was dealt with by Max Lucado

On Friday morning, after the Promise Keepers event was over, the 350 CRC pastors were invited to a denominational gathering.

Pastors shared their personal pain and recognized some institutionalized pain: racism, coming to the CRC from outside the Dutch socio-ethnic sub-



The Class of '93: From l. to r.: Norman Sennema (Charlottetown, P.E.I.); Kristin Vos (St. John, Ind.); Erick Schuringa (Waterdown, Ont.); Philip Leo (Baldwin, Wis., Class of '94); Kevin De Raaf (Owen Sound, Ont.); Richard de Lange (St. Catharines, Ont.); Michael Bootsma (Blenheim, Ont.); Michael Vandyk (Dunnville, Ont.).

concluded with guided prayer time in small groups. Many tearful confessions were shared. God's grace was received by many who had slipped into thinking that it was their job to dispense that grace.

The final day, Thursday, was spent seeking to fill hearts that were spilled on Wednesday. With continued prayer for the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, we were given vision for

the congregation I serve by shedding tears. I shared tears which expressed the joy and sorrow that can only mix when one pours out the soul before God.

The beauty of the conference, for me, was that it did not try to teach me all kinds of information as much as it drew me into the presence of God. There was healing for ministry — and I did not even know that there

in two simple lines. First, he had everybody shout out their denominational affiliation. Babel-babble was all we heard. Then he asked us to say the name of the one we trust for salvation. "Jesus Christ" everybody shouted loud and clear. It was suggested by a few Christian Reformed pastors that the video of Lucado's entire speech be played for the next meeting of synod.

culture, theological and ecclesiological war, and being a Canadian in an Americanized situation. More tears. Many hugs. Much encouragement and shared love. We did not tire of renewal.

The Promise Keepers Clergy Conference offered a deep cleansing and refreshing of the soul. The church can only benefit from a renewal of its leadership.